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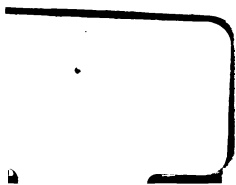
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THE SINLESS ONE

OR

THE LIFE MANIFESTED;

BY
Thomas
JOSHUA T. TUCKER.

Ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν — καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη. — JOHN.



BOSTON:
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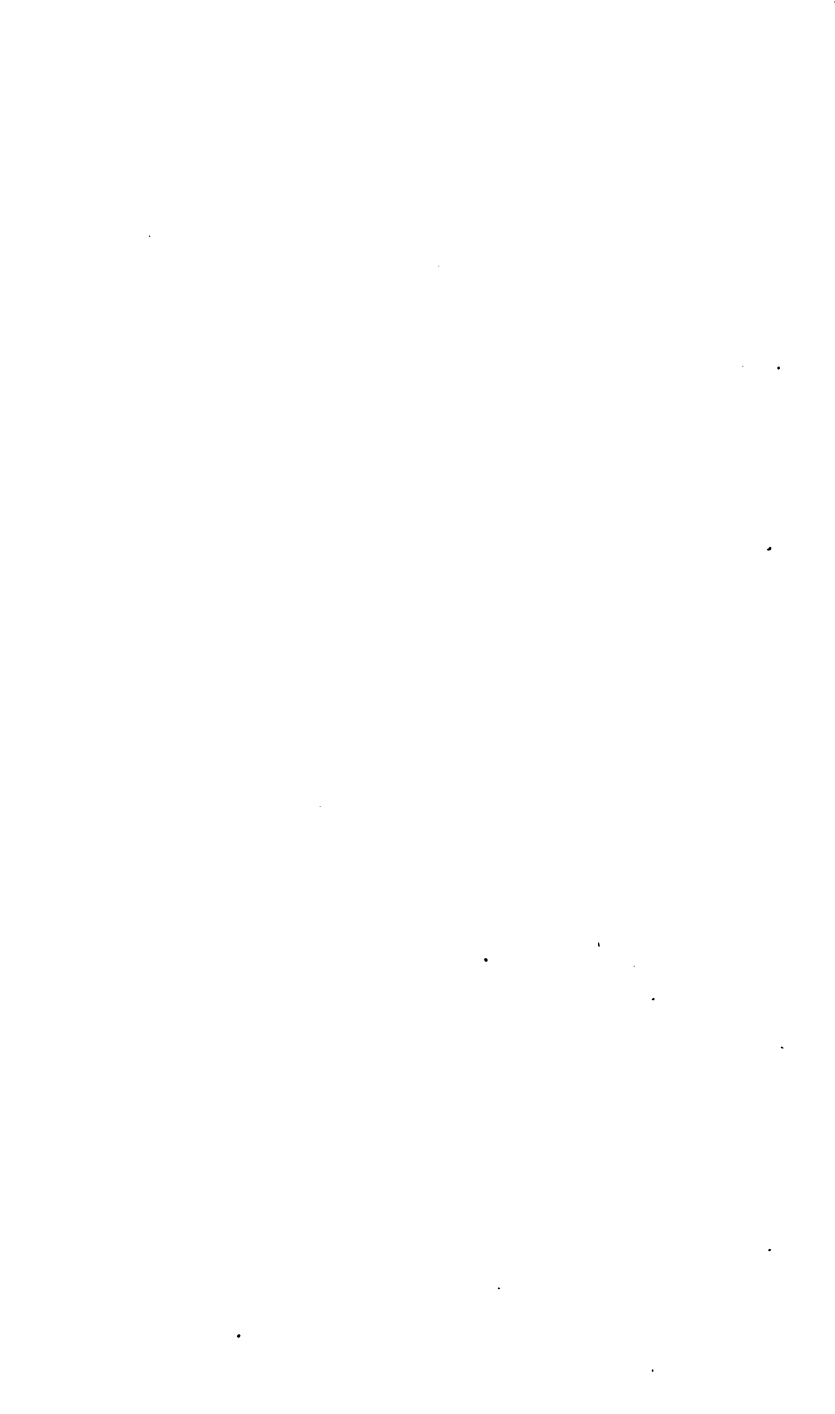
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TO MY WIDOWED MOTHER,

WITH WHOSE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTIONS MY EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS
ARE ASSOCIATED,

I AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBE

THIS VOLUME.



PREFACE.

VERY few words will explain the purpose of this book. It is, to arrange along the thread of the Evangelical Narrative a series of investigations and reflections springing from its records, in a suggestive more than an exhaustive form. By this, however, I do not mean that the work is of a *superficial* character. It has consumed a large amount of patient and honest labor. This department of literature is already very rich, yet the mine will still bear exploring. In venturing these studies, I have attempted the blending of a sound and sensible criticism, under guidance of reliable authorities, with a practical adaptation of my materials to the uses of Christian experience, general information, and the wants of existing

society. While keeping prominently in sight the vital, spiritual bearings of my theme, I have sought to find the points of its connection with the concerns of secular life, whether on a wide or narrow circle. Of course, the work is one of selection. Many questions of minute speculation and collateral discussion have been passed unmentioned, if not unobserved. But affluent resources of pertinent illustration and suggestion have been put under tribute. I also hope that these pages will add something to the means of obviating the more respectable objections of sceptics against the divine claims and witnesses of our religion. Two much desired objects will be gained, if this volume shall help to bring up the public mind to a better acquaintance with the history and literature of these ancient memoirs; and, at the same time, shall assist to connect them more closely with the movement of our own age, as being wholly in sympathy with the demands of a right human progress, — the very radix, in fact, of a true civilization.

Very little of the processes, by which questions

of criticism have been examined, will appear in what shall follow; while it is thought that the positions reached will approve themselves as tenable. I have not wished to burden the page with a needless apparatus of research. The Robinson edition of Newcome's Greek Harmony has been followed in reducing the Evangelists to a continuous recital. A careful citation of references in footnotes will show in what directions the writer's investigations have chiefly travelled. The labors of Trench, Bloomfield, Neander and others have been freely consulted. And for many a beautiful poetic fragment, the reader will be indebted, though not exclusively, to the author of the "Christian Year." It may, perhaps, as well be added, that the mottos of the several chapters are referred not with minute accuracy to their sources, but to their general Biblical connection.

HOLLISTON, MASS., April, 1855.



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The exact order of events, especially towards the crowded close of Christ's career, is considerably in question among harmonists of the Gospels, e. g. The raising of Lazarus. The incident of the Blessing of the Children, which, for convenience of materials, I have discussed on pp. 244-247, probably occurred a little later, as referred to, in passing, on p. 254. On p. 107, line 2 from foot, for "has not" read *had* not.

THE SINLESS ONE.

CHAPTER I.

AND FOUND THE BABE LYING IN A MANGER.—LUKE.

WERE perfection of result the only condition of natural or moral delineation, no fact, save of the most common sort, would have found its portraiture. The artist, whether the pencil or the pen be his instrument, can only approximate the absolute truth of his theme. How life-like shall be his work, will be measured by the accuracy of his perceptions and the delicacy and vigor of his handling. No subject, within the limits of representation, can be thoroughly exhausted. Niagara, Mont Blanc, the human countenance, the flowers of a summer parterre, have had a thousand copyists, and may have as many more; each tasking to the utmost his genius or industry to re-create, in colors or in language, that which can have but one faultless embodiment.

Of all difficult things, nothing is more beyond the reach of a perfect exhibition, than individual character and influence. To analyse and estimate the acts and sentiments of any man is a labor which never attains to higher than a comparative completeness. In studying, however, the choicest specimens of our race, we are sure to find one though an unfortunate alleviation. As we detect in them the traces of weaknesses and errors, common with our own, we are emboldened to

Christ's character

increasingly studied;

pursue the delineation of their existence, as of beings modelled constitutionally like ourselves. We do not seem to be altogether repelled from the moral dissection of even the best of them, by a glory too dazzling for a steady vision. But the prolonged and close contemplation of the spirit and the acts of Jesus Christ is like the effect, to the bodily eye, of gazing intently up into the quivering brilliancy of a cloudless summer sky. The organ of sight shrinks in its too feeble grasp from the strong radiance which glows in those far-off heights of heaven. Or it is as when the Hebrew shepherd drew near to the bush, which shone with the emblematic splendor of Jehovah's presence. We realize that we also tread on sacred ground. We almost can hear a voice calling to us — Draw not nigh hither ; put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy !

Yet the scenes of Christ's earthly career involve our salvation, temporal and eternal. His teachings are the guide, his deeds the pillar of our faith, his disposition the only unexceptionable example of human feeling and self-control. In the wisdom which he spake, we have the loftiest revelation of truth ; in the whole contour and combination of his spiritual nobleness, we behold with admiration a development fit to challenge the imitation of every immortal. It is becoming more and more positive, that the weightiest interests of this world are clustering consciously around the evangelical records ; that, in love and in hate, earnest minds are rallying hither, to scrutinize these histories with a keener research ; that on this very ground the last great battle of error and truth, scepticism and faith, is to be fought. The personal question of Jesus of Nazareth — his words, his acts, his claims — is deepening its hold, every year, upon the thoughts, the speculations, the anticipations of men, whose intellectual efforts touch efficiently the springs of society's

By whom?

Expectation of Messiah.

political and economical as well as religious movements. Strangely are classes of the most diverse origin and affinities uniting to give *popularity* to Christ, as a leading agent of human enlightenment and elevation. But some of them with a lowness of view, which converts their professed complacency in his character into quite as pernicious an engine against his proper mission on earth, as does the coarse hostility of the worst of his avowed contemners. The age, then, has not yet dawned, when the writings of these four Hebrew narrators of what Jesus said and did are likely to be superannuated. Our subject has no staleness, whatever may be adjudged concerning its present treatment. That the appliances of our task be worthily and successfully used, may God Most High, the teacher of the ignorant, the helper of the weak, graciously accompany our inquiries and meditations with his blessing !

It is certain that the coming of Messiah, on a mission of reform to our world, was a matter of frequent remark among the earlier historians, prophets, poets of antiquity. From Moses to Malachi these notices are scattered through the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of them will require a reference in the progress of these chapters. The expectation of the advent of a distinguished personage to give new strength and glory to their national institutions was, of old, current among the Jews. More than this hope had arisen upon some of their hearts. Nor was this idea, in its political or religious significance, altogether of Jewish possession. The Gentile races had gained a fragmentary version of this fact in prospect ; and the eyes of many lands were looking wistfully towards Judea, in excited anticipation of some quite unrivalled social and moral development. The Roman historians of this period make distinct mention of the circumstance. Tacitus and Suetonius agree that it was a deep settled opinion, that,

The world at peace.Preparations.

near those times, a kingdom should arise "which from Judea should extend itself over the whole earth." — "There had been for a long time, over all the East, a constant persuasion," Suetonius writes, "that at that time some one should come out of Judea who should obtain universal dominion." This was a very remarkable presentiment. We can only account for it on the ground that as the fulness of time had now come in reality for the manifestation of "Emanuel God with us," the Almighty Spirit had spread a consciousness through men's bosoms that they were at the eve of this new era; that, thus impressed, they might the more promptly welcome its disclosures of truth and duty to their faith and love. Yet strange to declare, when the Being of their long solicitude appeared among them, so secular, unspiritual, so undisguisedly political and selfishly ambitious were even his own countrymen's views of what Messiah should be and do, that they recognized not his presence. "The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

The advent of Jesus was preceded and attended by a train of most impressive occurrences. Heaven did not permit its high Ambassador to lack historic honors — if then unnoticed, since then most amply celebrated — at the commencement of his sojourn in the flesh. By a significant coincidence, the period of the birth of the Prince of Peace was a period of tranquility throughout the civilized globe. Its wars were hushed. Not a hostile campaign disturbed the quiet of Rome's vast dependencies, when he became incarnate whose nativity was the proclamation of "peace on earth." Already the "Messenger," who was to prepare the Redeemer's way before him, was at hand, soon to go in the spirit and power of Elijah, the Prophet of an ancient reformation, to make the people ready for their Teacher, Saviour, King. The number of the

The Annunciation.Mary's honors.

days of Daniel's predictions, which were to precede the birth of the Messiah, were accomplished. The sceptre now departing from Judah and the lawgiver from between his feet, was Jehovah's own token that Shiloh was come.* The years of expectation were ended, and those who were waiting in pious confidence for the kingdom of God, were now to witness the fulfilment of that patriarchal prediction, which for ages had sustained the hopes of Abraham's children; "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; out of Jacob shall He come that shall have dominion."

By the ministration of angels the laws of God's moral government had been given to man, amid the memorable scenes of the burning mount. By the intervention of the same seraphic servants of Jehovah, his nativity was accomplished who was to ransom mankind from the condemnation of those broken commandments. Commissioned of God, Gabriel was sent to the virgin Mother of Jesus, with the announcement that, in a manner at once miraculous and unprecedented, the Messiah was about to appear in the flesh, as her own son. Though humble in life, unknown to fame, a greater honor was thus preparing for this remote daughter of David's line, than to have been the mother of one of earth's emperors. For who knows now the names of these, or cares for their griefs or joys — whether of the Cæsars of the old or of the recent world? But who does not know and love the name and the memory of her who cradled on her bosom the babe of Bethlehem? We join not, indeed, in her worship, mother of Christ though she be, for this belongs to God only. We resent, as an indignity to one deserving no such senseless flattery, Rome's recent "dogma" of her sinless birth. She

*Genesis 49 : 10.

 Christ's humble extraction.

 Its morale.

was but an erring mortal like ourselves.* Yet, most distinguished of all the human race will her record ever stand, through whom "the Life was manifested" in a mortal form. Here, too, we read a lesson of Providence. While it protected the truth of prophecy by deriving the parentage of Jesus from the regal line of Judea, hardly in that whole lineage, we suppose, could a more lowly family have been found, in which to cast the birth-place of the infant Saviour. Human wisdom, arranging this eventful errand, would have sent the angel to some one of the palaces of the great, where flowed King David's blood, thus to surround the coming embassy from heaven with earthly grandeur and power. But God designed that no part of the exalted fame of his Beloved Son should be dependent on worldly pomp and influence. While, by this selection, God has for all ages put honor upon hard-working industry and honest poverty, rebuking most pointedly the pride of mere affluence and state, he purposed that the generations to come should confess, as they have, that Christ's excellence was the loveliness, the sublimity of uncontaminated virtue. His name was to be the remembrance of nought but goodness. His kingdom was to shine resplendent in grace, not in gold. No selfish inducements should it hold out to attract adherents to its alliance. Poor in temporal possessions, but rich in celestial treasures, Jesus was to stand forth among men as a test, a touchstone of attachment or hostility to simple moral worth. Therefore, in all the arrangements of

* The Virgin's freedom from the stain of original sin (Immaculate Conception) shows itself as a tenet of the ultra-Mariolaters, in the first half of the 12th century, but met a successful resistance from St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, and other eminent church-leaders.—Neander's Hist. IV. 331—333: Boston Edition. What the *Dark Ages* could not do for its establishment as an Article of Faith, the *Nineteenth Century* has effected.

Providence fulfils prophecy.The taxation.

this wondrous transaction, and in respect to all the parties involved in it, do we find the Divine Providence illustrating so strikingly the inspired declaration — “He-raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.”

He, who has in his hands the hearts of rulers and of subjects, can readily sway their determinations to subserve his own designs. The birth of Christ laid under contribution not merely the services of loyal angels, but also of heathen and adverse powers. In one of the prophetic Psalms, we have the devout writer reproving the anticipated confederacy of the governments of the world against the promised Messiah. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed.” This was their purpose then, as it has mostly continued to be. Cæsar, on his throne, intended no aid to the introduction of a greater than himself to his empire, to overturn its pagan idolatries. But God made use of his pride to further his own high ends. Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. His parents lived at a distance to the northward, in Nazareth. At the very juncture when the requirements of prophecy demanded the presence of his mother in Bethlehem of Judea, a decree is issued by the Roman Emperor, Augustus, to estimate the resources of his vast dominions. Palestine had recently been added to the provinces of his realm. The order for this general enrollment or census was consequently sent thither, and committed for execution to Herod, the Jewish provincial king. The custom of the Hebrews was to assemble the various tribes separately on these occasions. Joseph and Mary were of the tribe of Judah. While, therefore, in obedience to the imperial rescript, and to their national usage, every one went to be taxed to his own city, Joseph and Mary, his espoused wife, went up also out of

An objection,stated and answered.

Galilee, from the city of Nazareth into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

With what ease can Omniscience devise expedients to compass its benevolent purposes. How tranquilly does God sit "on the circle of the earth," contemplating its busy scenes; and when some great object, worthy of his interference, demands his care, it is but to will the event, and the reluctance, the rage, the short-sighted opposition of human depravity are made to praise him, by bringing to pass, however undesignedly, his counsels. Jehovah rides forward to the ends of his moral administration on the stormy clouds of human passion and rebellion. The winds of ambition, strife, malignant hate, he maketh his chariot. None can stay his progress. How strong should be the confidence of his loyal subjects, that out of evil, both natural and moral, he will bring ultimate and glorious triumphs to the cause of holiness and salvation.

An objection, however, has here been started to the historic veracity of the Evangelist, which if valid might quite unsettle our reliance on the general authenticity of his narrative. The alleged difficulty is this. This taxing, which Luke connects with Christ's birth, he also says took place "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Now Cyrenius was not formally instituted in this government until some twelve years after the birth of Christ. How then could a taxation under his administration, so long subsequent, be contemporary with the nativity of our Lord, as stated in the record?

The discrepancy is more in appearance than reality. Cyrenius was a public officer of the empire in Judea many years before his appointment as governor, as Josephus informs us; and might have been connected with this taxing

The shepherds.

The natal hour.

in some responsible station. But this would not meet the precise point of the objection. It is easily answered by an acquaintance with Roman customs. A taxation involved two distinct acts, often separated by a considerable interval of time : — the first, a census of those legally subject to the impost ; the second, the actual levying of the tax. Before the birth of Jesus, the decree went forth that all the world, that is, the imperial world, should be taxed. This brought Christ's parents to their proper place of registration ; but the *taxing* itself, it is expressly said, in parenthesis, was made " when Cyrenius was governor," — having some years later entered on his administration among the Jews. If it be contended, still, that the narrative affirms that Joseph went up to Bethlehem *to be taxed* at this time, I reply — the whole transaction would most naturally take its name from a most important part of it, though occurring at a future period — the two being but portions of one inseparable fact. But again, it is pertinent to reply, that the original word signifies primarily, " to be entered on tablets " * for the purpose of an assessment ; which, with the well-established usage of the Romans now described, confirms our explanation and delivers the Evangelist from all appearance even of error.

During the summer season in the East, those who have charge of the flocks are accustomed to drive them abroad for pasturage, remaining with them for their defence from rapacious animals. A company of shepherds was thus employed in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, while in that village Christ's parents were seeking a shelter. In the silence of the night the firmament above them is illumined with an

* *Απογραφή*. Neander seems quite needlessly to concede that Luke has made here a statement historically inexact ; which he says, however, is of no importance whatever for the object which he had in view. *Life of Christ*, p. 21, *Harper's Ed.*, N. Y., 1849.

Earth indifferent,but not Heaven.

unwonted splendor; the glory of the Lord shining round about them agitated their fears as of some unexpected judgment to the land. But while thus oppressed with terror and amazement, an angel from heaven removes their apprehensions with the welcome tidings, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." The great event has transpired. That child is born, whose titles the prophet had announced in terms of dignity and of majesty transcending all human elevation and power. Earth's most important fact, from first to last, has now become historic. But how differently is it received from the immeasurably inferior occurrences which give an heir to this world's royalties. When the signal was made from his capital that a son was born to Napoleon and to France, a thousand cannon from as many fortresses rolled the joyous proclamation round his proud empire. Nothing of this noisy exultation told of the advent of the Messiah. No ready herald stood waiting to report to anxious servants of state his natal hour, upon whose shoulders was more than the government of a Cæsar.

"And but for the mysterious voicing
Of that unearthly choir rejoicing;
And but for that strange herald gem —
The star that burned o'er Bethlehem,
The shepherds on his natal morn
Had known not that their Lord was born."

Yet, though earth was silent, there was congratulation over this stupendous incarnation of the Divinity. Those blessed beings, the beholders and worshippers of Christ's pre-existent majesty, leaving their abodes of light, came down within this lower firmament to celebrate their God descended to dwell with men. As their choral hymn, on creation's ancient morning, had sung the Power which made

Luke and John.

The manger cradle.

the universe, so now they strike their harps to a loftier theme — creation's Lord vailing his Deity in humanity, to ransom from death the fallen offspring of his benevolence. *That* was the workmanship of Omnipotence, shaping and establishing the elements of material nature. *This* was the victory of Eternal love, bent on the sublimer task of curbing, subduing, renovating the hearts of sinners. That hour which witnessed the Lord of Life taking upon himself the "form of a servant" to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the forgiveness of sins — there was reason for heaven to look down with throbbing sympathy and pleasure, if earth was oblivious of its interests; and for heaven's sweetest voices to sing, if not to many listeners below, yet to all the attentive multitudes above — "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

The Saviour is come; Christ the Lord has appeared; God has visited his people. Such was the momentous communication to the wondering shepherds, such the burden of that celestial anthem to which the firmament resounded. Directed to Bethlehem, to attest the truth of these tidings, thither these men repaired in haste, to lay their homage at the feet of this illustrious Being. How obscure the condition in which these first visitors of the infant Christ discovered this child of prophecy and of promise — of a covenant from eternity. From that scene of unearthly splendor which they had just witnessed, how wide the distance to the lowly cot, the outcast sheltering-place of Him whose former glories had been one with the Father's. Read these opening verses of his narrative by Luke, and then turn to the first of John's Gospel, for a glimpse of the honors of his previous existence. And when your mind has struggled in vain to ascend to the infinite altitudes of his dignity, who "in the beginning was

No room in the inn.Antagonism of flesh and spirit.

the Word — with God — and who was God — by whom all things were made," then return with these astonished but delighted shepherds to that manger-cradle! Thrust out alike from the crowded residences of the rich and the poor, behold your Lord! Who of that thronging populace conjectured the signal occurrence which was transpiring in the midst of their thoughtless levity? While they were enjoying the comforts, the luxuries of life, who supposed that He, whom prophets had foretold, and princes had expected, and angels were celebrating, was drawing the first breath of his human days in the place of the irrational brutes? The busy and the idle flocked by the obscure retreat of the infant Jesus, nor thought that in so lowly a spot their own Emanuel could be secluded. A few only of the humblest of men stooped over him with kind attention. All else save the celestial spectators of this unexampled humiliation passed onward with indifference. Christ's birth-place was a stable, "because there was no room for them in the inn."

No room in the inn! How striking a picture have we here, in the first hours of his sojourn among men, of the world-wide disesteem and rejection which has ever followed the Redeemer's footsteps. "No room in the inn." Where the lovers of ease and pleasure and profit and honor have been wont to congregate, to push their eager bargains, to satiate themselves with earth's good things, small entrance has there usually been for the entertainment of Christ's cause and kingdom. It is the old antagonism of the spirit of worldliness and the spirit of holiness; the former usurping the high and the coveted positions of influence, authority, fame, demanding and engrossing the best and chiefest share of life and care and thought; and pushing the claims of God, redemption, eternity, anywhere, if but they may be forgotten in their out-cast obscurity. So has human perverseness

Christ not always to be an exile.

ordered it. Satan has had the *inn* — godliness the *manger* ; Satan the most valued — Christ the least valued of human things. It is so in individual examples of irreligion — sin absorbing to the purposes of the flesh the choicest years of effort ; piety crowded into the dregs of an exhausted nature. Thus, too, in the policies of states and nations, how seldom can God secure a respectful attention in cabinets and courts and senates. The entertainment of Christianity and her Great Teacher, of true and unaffected religion, has not been principally among the renowned, the affluent, the flattered, the mighty ones of the earth. *No room for them in the inn.* The most of his worshippers Christ has found in lower stations. His kingdom has not yet passed its entire stage of visible humiliation and exile. But all this shall be ere long reversed. There will be room for Jesus in the inn ; room for him wherever power is to be wielded and honor reaped ; room for his friends, his church — his beauteous bride, with her exalted Lord and Husband, upon the throne of universal and eternal glory.

CHAPTER II.

AND THE CHILD GREW, AND WAXED STRONG IN SPIRIT, FILLED WITH WISDOM: AND THE GRACE OF GOD WAS UPON HIM. — LUKE.

IN obedience to the Mosaic institutions, the infant Saviour, eight days from his birth, received the rite of circumcision, and the name Jesus, which had been given him by the angel. That he, who was thus publicly consecrated to the work of human salvation, and must therefore have been sinless, was not subjected to this ceremonial, in token of any depravity which needed thus symbolically to be taken away, is certain. Neither by the taint of original or actual sin was his pure nature defiled.* But the reason of his subjection to this national custom was, that in all things he might fulfil the law which he had undertaken to honor by an entire obedience. Here was manifested, also, the fact that he had in very deed assumed the likeness of man. Thus further did he remove one barrier from his approach to the hearts of his countrymen, who regarded the uncircumcised as utter aliens from God's favor. Exemption in his case, one would think, might have been pleaded from those external forms at least, which were to be suspended or superseded by his advent. But no such

* Before going further, I may as well say, that I have taken for granted, without an argument, Christ's moral perfection. If any one is curious to see what can be said *against* this position, he will find its strongest impeachment in F. W. Newman's Treatise on this topic: republished, with Henry Rogers' masterly refutation of its strange sophistry, by Crosby, Nichols & Co., Boston: 1854. Notwithstanding this assault, I deny that it is an open question at the world's tribunal, and shall not modify what I have written concerning it at the commencement of Chapter XIV.

The circumcision.

A lesson.

Jeremy Taylor.

exception was claimed. And in this a lesson is taught us of self-denying obedience to every duty ; of prompt compliance with every obligation which the good of man and the honor of God imposes on us.

It were well could this lesson be more thoroughly learned by Christians ; could they realize that it is ever more safe to go too far even, in efforts of obedience, than to fall short of the proper mark. Take one example. A person, regarding himself as a believer, thinks it of no especial importance for him to publicly profess that hope before the world. For others the church may be a desirable home, but not indispensably for him. He may reach heaven without its help. *Possibly* he may. But he is also bound to do all the benefit to society which might result from his consistent, avowed consecration of himself to God. Christ did not need to be circumcised for his own sake, but for the sake of others. Every regenerate soul needs to be openly given to God both for its own and others' advantage. This principle has a wide application. There is pithy meaning in what Jeremy Taylor says of men's reluctance fully and fairly to meet and balance every claim of moral duty — "The proportions and degrees of this are so nice, and of so difficult determination, that men are more apt to untie the girdle of discipline with the loose hand of dispensation and excuse, than to strain her too hard by the strictures and bindings of severity ; but the error were the surer on this side."

At forty days from his birth, another Jewish rite was performed for Jesus by his parents, upon the same ground of scrupulous regard to the religious usages of their race — his presentation in the Temple, for purification. This transaction was attended by a circumstance which again affectingly exhibited the lowliness of his earthly estate. The offering of those who could afford it, on these occasions, was a lamb for

The purification.An impressive group.

a burnt sacrifice, and a dove for a sin-offering. From those who were not able to make these gifts, a pair of turtle doves was accepted, or two young pigeons.* This was the offering of Mary. Too poor to vie with others in the outward expression of her gratitude to God, yet with a heart filled to overflowing with adoring joy, she brought that infant son to the altar, and bowed with her simple oblation there, in a worship of the spirit — how much more valuable to God than the costly presents of an undevout soul. So still must God be sought with something more precious than silver and gold. It was an humble company which bent at that moment in the presence of Jehovah, in this simple but touching act. The eye of the uninstructed observer discovered nothing there but poverty and thankfulness. It was a scene from the obscurest walks of life; and he, thus offered to God, manifested to the casual beholder no token of a higher destiny than that of his undistinguished parents. How mistaken this judgment! To the eye of faith, there was gathered a group, in which was one on whom angels gazed with rapturous adoration. And holy Simeon, directed by the Holy Ghost to that spot, gave utterance to the emotions which filled his bosom, when taking in his arms the blessed babe, he exclaimed, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”.

We cannot dwell on the feelings of satisfied expectation, of overflowing delight, which must have gladdened the few in Israel who were enabled to realize the exalted character of this remarkable child. Old Simeon thought that he had nothing more for which to live, when his aged sight had been permitted a vision of the promised Messiah; “and now, after all this, no object could be pleasant but the joys of Paradise.”

* Leviticus 12.

Eastern visitors.Herod's jealousy and fears.

What, then, must have been the emotions of the parents of him, in whom those who spake by the Spirit of God beheld the fulfilment of the most glorious pledge ever given to mankind. Indeed, that meek-eyed mother had much to hide in her heart, for deep, and wondering, and joyous meditation.

Returning from the Temple at Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the infant Jesus was honored with a visit from certain Eastern princes or sages, whom God had directed to do homage to his Son. Over all those regions of ancient civilization, the anticipation of the Messiah was spread, though with much of intermingled error. Guided by a luminous meteor, as was Israel through the desert, a deputation of these learned men arrived with presents for the new-born king. Their inquiry was openly made for the infant monarch of the Jews. Their purpose was freely declared—to do him reverence. This coming to Herod's ears—the ruler whom Roman arms had placed on the conquered throne of Judea—he was greatly exasperated by the report. Having convened his council, investigation was made concerning the predicted birth-place of the looked-for Christ. The prophecies, which expressly specified Bethlehem as that spot, did not tend to allay his fears. Sending for the wise men from the East, he attempted by stratagem to put out of his way the object of his jealousy. He despatched them to Bethlehem to search out the child, and then to inform him of the abode of Jesus; that he might go “and worship him also.” Again the star appeared, and by its leading, these pilgrims found the humble dwelling of the Saviour. Were they astonished also at the impoverished, neglected, unhonored condition of Him whose coming fame had reached even their remote land? If they were,—undeterred by these mean appearances, still did they not withhold from him their profound worship; they kept not back their costly gifts. So would an angel from heaven

The Bethlehem massacre.The flight to Egypt.

wonder at the treatment which the Redeemer yet receives from mortals. But angels and archangels delight to do him homage, and eternal ages will lay the tribute of ransomed souls at his feet. Blessed and wise are they who shall not be ashamed of a world-despised and rejected Christ.

Warned of God in a dream not to revisit the blood-thirsty Herod, the Magi returned by another route to their own country. The king, thus deprived of his prey, resolved by one sweeping blow to secure the Saviour's death. The children of Bethlehem, under the age of two years, were indiscriminately massacred, in the hope that Mary's son might perish in the slaughter. No one who has read the history of this tyrant by Josephus, will question his ability to perpetrate a crime like this. Tradition reports that Herod's own infant boy was not exempted from this butchery, lest, by some possibility, he might be the dreaded object of his vague resentment. There is no good reason to disbelieve this incident. Josephus, indeed, does not mention it. Compared with many other atrocities of this miserable man, it might seem not demanding even a notice. Bethlehem was but a small town, and the number of male children of the assigned age would not actually be very large. This would not lessen the guilt of the tragedy, though it might go to account for the silence of the Jewish historian.

But from this snare of the adversary, a guardian providence had saved the holy child. Admonished in a dream of this peril, the parents of Christ had passed by a rapid flight to Egypt, so often honored as the shelter of the objects of God's love from danger. There they remained until the death of Herod, which occurred the same year. Again they set forth for Judea; but hearing that a son of Herod, no less merciless, had secured his throne, they passed by Bethlehem, their former and as it would seem preferred residence,

Dreams and premonitions.The curtain falls.

and came and dwelt in Nazareth of Galilee. These occurrences fulfilled the prophetic intimations, — “ Out of Egypt have I called my son ; ”* — and “ He shall be called a Nazarene. ” †

We have noticed in our narrative the frequent agency of impressions made upon the minds of individuals, by dreams, and other methods of supernatural warning and intelligence. The possibility of such communications follows closely upon the doctrine of a personal and omnipresent God, constantly and actively employing himself in the government of his creatures. The probability of this kind of information respects the importance of the occasions which are supposed to be thus signalized. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of these inspired records. Nor do I know why still God may not give us premonitions of the future, at certain eventful crises of our lives. Christian wisdom must guard this admission from superstitious and conceited uses, while filial love and confidence give entertainment to the thought, that we ourselves are not so shut out from unseen beings but that at times impressions may reach our spirits, for guidance and comfort, from the same source of providential oversight and parental care.

At this point the curtain falls upon our history, concealing most guardedly for many long years the incidents of Christ's advancing life. In this, the Divine Spirit has departed widely from the practice of human biographers. They, to honor their subject, are content with nothing less than the fullest possible preservation of every circumstance which may illustrate the unfolding of character. The scenes of childhood are searched for materials of interest and instruction. Nothing is suffered to escape to which partial affection can attach

* Hosea 11 : 1. † Ref. Bible.

A picture for the imagination.

any importance. But the early existence of Jesus on earth is an almost unpenetrated seclusion. Beyond the eventful occurrences of his infancy, until his public manifestation to Israel, thirty years thereafter, one single glance is all which discloses to us the already resplendent virtues of this most lovely, most beloved youth. The unrevealed filling up of this protracted retirement is left for imagination to supply. We meditate on the theme, and strive to picture the quiet, unbroken, unobtrusive happiness of that little family, through which Jesus, as a son and a brother, diffused the influence of his heavenly temper. We think — how blessed must have been those parents' hearts in such a child, as year after year gave new beauty and strength to his faultless nature ; while the froward, impetuous passions of unsanctified boyhood never caused those hearts to bleed with sorrow, to tremble with apprehension of the excesses of a maturer depravity. We fancy that never was there a household so like, in its occupants, to one of the mansions of heaven, while, day by day, "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon him." But after thought has done its utmost in portraying these scenes, still do we feel, that had it pleased God to give us the bright and beautiful reality of this paradise on earth, the half of its blessedness had not been conjectured.

"O happy mother! happiest far
Of all who felt a mother's throes! —
What though no more the mystic star
Above thy path through darkness glows?
When gazing on the calm repose
Of Him, thy cherished child divine,
The bliss earth's fondest mother knows,
Oh! can it give a thought of thine?"

Nazareth, an inconsiderable town among the mountains of Lower Galilee, situated near the edge of a dangerous preci-

Twelve years old.

Jerusalem.

A painful suspense.

pice, was the residence of the parents of Jesus after their return from Egypt. Of this period, one fact only is noticed, — that annually they went up to Jerusalem at the feast of Passover. It is probable that Christ accompanied them on these journeys. At other times, he is described as rendering them the customary obedience and service of childhood; distinguished, to human view, in nothing from the associates of his youth, save the uncommon promise and ripeness of his juvenile capacities.

At the twelfth year of the life of Christ, the return of the great national festival of Passover brought the family of Joseph to the sacred city. The customary rites were accomplished, and the company commenced their homeward journey. As a large part of the population went up to this feast, the public avenues from Jerusalem were densely thronged by the departing visitors. Those leaving with the parents of Christ were numerous; and he, though missed from his own household, was supposed to be in some part of the caravan. But at the place of their evening encampment, he was not to be found. Filled with forebodings of evil, his parents hastened back to Jerusalem, and for three days vainly sought him among the resorts of that city; a task of heavy anguish amid so many liabilities of his irrecoverable loss. Had no token of a superior nature and destiny marked out that youth among his fellows, this long and fruitless search had been sufficiently afflictive. But it passes all conception how close must have been the attachment cemented between those parents and this son, by twelve years of faultless obedience, of unclouded love. Those were sleepless nights to at least one weary watcher. At last, directing their steps to the Temple, they discovered with astonishment their child surrounded by a company of the venerable rabbis of the nation, asking them such questions and giving them such answers

The sword piercing.

A fearful blessing.

as filled all who listened with admiration at his understanding.

Here shone forth for a moment the brightness of Christ's conscious divinity. Had Mary been better able to restrain her feelings of maternal anxiety, and to have contemplated calmly this novel spectacle, she might have recognized more distinctly the true character of her son, discoursing thus "beyond his experience, beyond his years, beyond even the common spirits of the best of men, to the height of a prophet, with the clearness of an angel, and the infallibility of inspiration ;"* she would doubtless have spared the half-reproachful inquiry with which she gave utterance to her pent-up excitement. But the feelings of the mother prevailed at the moment over all else ; and aggrieved at the occasion of her distress, fearful, perhaps, of its repetition, she said to him — "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Was *this* the first piercing of the sword through her own heart, which aged Simeon had told her of ? Ah, too great a thing was it for a frail woman's strength, to be the mother of a child thus "wonderful." A fearful blessing, a perilous treasure was this to the tranquil flowing of her deep human love. Nor would his reply to that interrogatory do much to relieve this solicitude. With respectful deference to his earthly guardians, but with a clear sense of his glorious origin and commission, the youthful Messiah said — "How is it that ye sought me ? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?" My *Father's* business ! What vistas of supernatural revelation, past and prospective, were opened by this momentary glance of light from a higher sphere. His parents did not fathom the full meaning of these words. They knew this child was

* Jeremy Taylor.

Heart-ponderings.Christ, a carpenter.

not wholly theirs. But they knew not all the mystery of his being, the compass of his work. "His mother kept all those sayings in her heart." Precious materials of thought for the pondering of that holy, earnest, tremblingly sensitive spirit. What affectionate jealousy in guarding from forgetfulness every sentence which escaped those lips from which spake the wisdom of God. Oh that the followers of Christ would still copy this example of his devoted mother, and *keep his sayings in their hearts*, as choicest tokens of love and memory, and eternal fidelity to his person and kingdom.

Once more returned to Nazareth with his parents, Jesus continued to dwell with them, and was subject to them as a kind and dutiful son. In cheerful compliance with the divine law, he "honored his father and his mother;" he put the sanction of his own high approval on the parental relation, and the family institution. The consciousness of his own essential superiority to his parents did not render him arrogant. Increasing daily in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, he still, and for many long years, remained beneath his reputed father's roof, assisting him in his employment of a carpenter, yielding submission to his will. I had occasion to observe, in speaking of Christ's descent from this class of society, that thus Divine Providence had conferred a marked encomium on useful, diligent labor. I will here repeat more emphatically the sentiment, as here more strikingly still this approval of mechanical industry is re-exhibited. I think that the spectacle of Jesus Christ toiling from boyhood to the age of thirty years, at his father's trade, might be profitably pondered by both parents and young men among us.* It might teach some valuable lessons where

* That Christ was a carpenter, cf. Mark 6 : 3, with Bloomfield. Neander, *Life of Christ*, pp. 40-41, also regards this as strongly probable; notes.

Hints for the times on labor, genteel and ungenteel.

they are much wanted. There is a manifest tendency, in this age, to dislike, and perhaps to despise manual labor. The hard and sinewy hand of daily toil is deemed too nearly allied to the vulgar and ungenteel to be grasped by many of our sons. Pride and indolence both foster this conclusion ; hence, children grow up ashamed of the honest, homely pursuits of their sire : and whilst they are not averse to frolic away the earnings of his unremitting diligence, they have no idea of putting their strength to the tools of his craft. They must find some politer business — where fashion, perchance, may flash its smiles upon them over a counter ; or, at least, where they will not have the mortification to confess that they owe their living to a *trade* rather than a *profession*. But, while waiting for some fortunate chance to turn up for an easy, genteel way of getting through the world, very possibly this aspiring youth will become so fond of the life of a mere idler, that, should some honorable trust fall in his path, he will have lost all that habit of application and that reliableness of character, needful to be availed of such an opportunity. And so we find that many of these, who think themselves above the level of patient, hard-handed industry, become mere hangers-on in the world, with loose, sensual dispositions and manners ; a standing mystery to all, *save a few*, by what ways and means they contrive to live and dissipate so freely ; while too many others, striving to do well in the overcrowded branches of mere unproducing traffic, exchange a manly independence which might have been theirs on the farm or in the workshop, for the embarrassments, and misfortunes, and distracting cares, and final bankruptcy of some pursuit, right and laudable in itself, but pushed ambitiously beyond all the necessities and demands of society. Parents have a responsibility here to repress the springing and growth of these mistaken and mischievous sentiments in their offspring. Does

The young man at home.Filial affections;

any useful art need an example to ennoble it? Christ has furnished that example. Providence may, of course, indicate that a child's sphere in life should not be the same as the parent's. But parents should teach their children that all honest toil is honorable, without regard to its conspicuousness in the view of men: that it is also honorable and right to seek positions of elevated influence, if it be done for purposes of enlarged usefulness. But, by every method, the young should be made to feel, that intrinsically dishonorable and wrong is a mere ambition of display as a motive to the selection of a pursuit in life; and even more so are these too current notions, that labor, which is rough and hard and soiling to the person, is disreputable and to be shunned by what some call "good society." Far, especially, from all such folly should those keep themselves who bear the name of Joseph the carpenter's son.

Yet a moment longer let me dwell upon this rare specimen of filial reverence and obedience. We see in Christ's earlier years no restive, impatient desire to be freed from his parents' control, to be beyond the reach of their oversight. "Strong as he waxed in the spirit, filled with wisdom," this very "grace of God which was upon him," taught him that religion has no weightier claims than those which find their fulfilment in the domestic circle. It is a most unworthy thing for the young to chafe under that household authority which God has instituted for their protection. It indicates a sad absence of the right appreciation of parental care and love during childhood's helpless stage, to witness an uneasy, feverish longing for the time to arrive, which shall slip the young man or woman from beneath the immediate influence of a father's or a mother's experience and counsels. Rather should the young heart have learned to repose itself so warmly in the affections and confidence of those who gave it

Should be permanent.

The first thirty years.

birth, that the hour should be shunned which must break up this endeared intercourse of home. When that hour may no longer be avoided, it may remove us from the sight of the guardians of our youth, but it will not dim or dull the remembrance of their beloved forms. Christ bore upon his thoughts, in tenderest concern, to the last dying struggle, that mother whose soul was bound up in deathless love with his own. While God spares a parent to us, the command of God and of nature stands fast—"Honor thy father and thy mother."

My youthful reader, Jesus Christ, as a child, a youth, places before you a model which is deserving your study, your imitation. Young men, behold this picture of the first thirty years of this purest, most perfect human life. Look at it carefully—its filial submissiveness, its quiet, cheerful, untiring industry, its deep and stainless piety. How searching a condemnation does it utter of many a habit of idle, unamiable insubordination; of thriftless, loose, demoralizing dissipation, among you; how conclusively does it stamp as unwise, irrational, perilous, ruinous, that neglect, perhaps contempt of personal religion, which makes the conversion of a young or middle-aged man, so rare and remarkable an occurrence.

CHAPTER III.

BUT WAS IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN. — PAUL.

A PERIOD of about eighteen years from Christ's discoursing with the Jewish Rabbis in the temple had elapsed, while, vailing his glory in an unnoticed retirement, he submitted literally to the form of a servant. Meantime, a new emperor — Tiberius Caesar — had ascended the imperial throne, and the government of Judea was committed to the Roman, Pontius Pilate. The preaching of John, earnest, popular, impassioned, and his life of severe purity and self-denial, had awakened a wide-spread religious interest; and multitudes were flocking forth into the valley of the Jordan to be baptized by him, for the remission of sins. The character of this man possessed many commanding and admirable features. Full of zeal and moral fortitude, he exhibited no personal ambition, but a ready renunciation of his favorable opportunities to have become the head of a strong body of adherents, and a most cordial consecration of his energies to the proclamation of *His* near approach "whose shoes latchet" he felt himself "not worthy to unloose." John's ministry was eminently evangelical in its doctrine of salvation; but a distinction must be taken between the baptism which he administered, and that which Christ afterwards enjoined in the Christian church. It seems to have had more resemblance to the Jewish baptism of proselytes, than to the ordinance as known to us. Still, whatever significancy it had, stood connected with Christ's anticipated work, to which his forerunner was now directing the mind of his countrymen — which

John and Christ.The baptism of Jesus.

may in truth be affirmed of all the preparatory religious rites of that people.

And now we behold the Son of God at length emerging from his solitude, and setting his face towards his high and hazardous mission, with the calm fortitude of a collected and upright spirit. Whilst the thirty years prescribed by the Levitical law as a novitiate for the sacred office were slowly wearing away, he, who needed no human endowments for this work, patiently remained in comparative inaction. But that term being expired, no further delay kept back the Redeemer from his labors. Richly inspired with "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," Christ bade adieu to the family and social circle which his presence had so abundantly honored and blessed, and assumed his prophetic and priestly office, to regenerate an ignorant, vicious world. He sought directly the place where John was ministering to the crowds which followed him. The Baptizer, whether known to Christ before or not, recognized his illustrious visitor, as he approached, and pointed him out as that "mightier" one who should come after him. Desired by Christ to baptize him, John at first refused, beholding in the applicant a sinless being who needed not this sign of purification, a Divine being, from whom his announcer felt that with much more propriety he might receive this ordinance. The specific intent and value of Christ's baptism appears to be this : it had no reference to any consciousness within him of sin, penitence, faith in a greater than himself. It was not, in any Christian sense, the virtual re-baptism of one circumcised, that is, essentially baptised, in infancy. It was an impressive act of introduction as Messiah to his official business and authority ; a public consecration of himself at the hands of his prophetic forerunner and witness, to

Its significancy.

The inaugurating sanctuary.

the holy work of redemption ; a special inauguration to his Mediatorship. And when from the water the Son of God came up, having thus fulfilled the order providentially arranged for his kingdom's manifestation to Israel,* Jehovah recognized the act with approbation ; while in the sight of all there congregated, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, flying downward from the heights of the firmament, rested on the Saviour — betokening, says Neander, “ a uniform unfolding of the life of God, the loftiness, yet the calm repose of a nature itself Divine, the indwelling of the Spirit *so* that he could impart it to others and fill them completely with it, not as a prophet, but as a Creator.” And to intensify yet more the impression of the scene, an audible voice from heaven was heard, saying ; “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; ” “ words,” continues the writer just quoted, “ which cannot possibly be applicable, in their full meaning to any mere man, but to Him alone in whom the perfect union of God and man was exhibited, and the idea of humanity completely realized.”†

With such appropriate ceremonial do we behold the Lord Jesus Christ thus ordained to his office of Priest and Saviour. Not like his ancestors of the royal line of David do we witness him kneeling before the high altar of Jehovah's temple, to receive his kingly crown, while the sacred oil is poured upon his head midst anthems of exultant praise. That temple is in possession of the enemies of his reign. The desert is his sanctuary, where, amid the rude scenery of nature, under the firmament's spreading dome, the announcing prophet proclaims his origin as the sent of God ; his commission, to remove human guilt ; and the Father Almighty and the Spirit Eternal set to that commission the authenticating seal

* John 1:31.

† Life of Christ, pp. 67-8.

 Symbols of the Trinity.

 A sudden transition.

of heaven. Here also we behold "the whole cabinet of the mysterious Trinity opened and shown, as much as the capacities of our present imperfections will permit;—the second person, in the vail of humanity; the third, in the shape, or with the motion of a dove; but the first keeping his primitive state; and as to the Israelites he gave notice by way of caution, 'Ye saw no shape, but ye heard a voice;' so now also God the Father gave testimony to his holy Son."* Is this then the "Consolation of Israel," the Hope of apostate man?—this the Son of God, beloved of Jehovah, around whose head that "emblem of purity, gentleness and love" is hovering? Yes, it is even so. The Light of the world is beaming upon its darkness. Blessed are they who observe the path which it discloses and pursue it. God recognized this Messenger to our race as the only Redeemer, in the hour when his own voice published this approval of his mission in the flesh. Alas! then, for those who see not in this "man of sorrows" their only Helper, their availing Sacrifice. Him God recognizes still as the only Mediator. So will the final judgment. Here is our refuge. To fly elsewhere for succor will avail us nothing. God, from his throne of violated majesty, has declared, that there is salvation in none other save this his beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased.

It is somewhat remarkable that this bright dawning of Christ's public life should have been so soon succeeded by a season of most painful, solitary trial and suffering. Instead of moving forward to a direct publication of his mission among men, under guidance of the Spirit of God he withdrew to a broken and desert tract of country near to the Jordan, and some twenty miles north-east from Jerusalem.

 * Jeremy Taylor.

The temptation.Its locality.

This scene of what we know familiarly as our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, is clearly marked out by those who have explored the regions of Christ's earthly residence. In the neighborhood of the place of his baptism is a "most miserable, dry and barren solitude, consisting of high, rocky mountains, so torn and disordered, as if the earth had here suffered some great convulsion in which its very bowels had been turned outward. A more dismal and solitary place can scarcely be found in the whole earth. About one hour's journey from the foot of the mountains which environ this wilderness, rises the lofty Quarantania,"* from whose summit the tempter might easily have pointed out to our Lord the various chief principalities of what was then commonly called the whole world. Amid these wastes Christ permitted himself to be detained for forty days ; and furnished to his great adversary an opportunity to test, by the most artful stratagems, the holy steadfastness of his pure spirit. Whether this was the first assault of Satan upon Jesus, we cannot determine. He who "was in all points tempted like as we are" may have known, in those unexhibited years of earlier life, the wiles of the deceiver, the buffetings of the devil. But this was his severest encounter with the foe. Occupied during this period in fasting and devotion preparatory to his approaching labors, power was granted to the adversary to vex his righteous soul, to prove by actual experiment how exalted was the virtue, how invincible the firmness of him who had assumed the task of rescuing apostate man from the kingdom of sin and perdition.

That the temptation of Christ was not a mere visionary transaction, though represented thus by some commentators, but that it was a real occurrence, is inferable from the fact

* Paxton and Bush.

 Its reality.

Insufficient theories.

 What it was not.

that it behoved him to be tempted, and that he was tempted as we are, in all points, as the apostle affirms. In this I do not contend for any visible personation of Satan to our Lord, more than to ourselves, when assailed by his devices. But Christ was to meet and vanquish the Prince of wickedness and deceit on his own ground. He was, by experience, to enter into the sympathies and circumstances of his tempted friends and followers in the flesh. An imaginary conflict with his enemy and theirs could have established between Christ and his people no such community of feeling. The narrative conveys no such impression. No moral necessity calls for this kind of an interpretation. It is wholly an arbitrary assumption. "If we suppose this to have been a vision or reverie, we have no means of deciding that the whole history of Christ is not also a vision, or a mere fiction."

Nor can we allow that the agent in this occurrence was the self-suggestion of unholy, rebellious thoughts, desires, in the mind of Jesus; for this would pre-suppose a depraved state of heart, and such was in no way true of the sinless Son of God. Nor, as some have argued, do we admit that the tempter was a crafty, malicious emissary from the Jewish council, despatched to entrap the Messiah into some treasonable, self-ruinous act. We repeat the fact, that here as elsewhere Christ was tempted as we are, with the exception that sin found in him no congenial sentiments, that over him sin gained no triumphs. And if the Christian is waylaid by one who, now as an angel of light, and now as a ravenous lion, goeth up and down the earth to deceive and destroy, we see in the scene before us the operations of that same fell foe of goodness, aiming, at the threshold of Christ's remedial labors, to cripple his power, to obstruct, if not to defeat his godlike undertaking. There was here an object at stake important

What it was.

The first seduction.

enough for the adroitest intervention of him, who in the resources of his fearful policy is

“Not less than archangel ruined.”

And in that gloomy wilderness we behold a struggle for the mastery between no humbler combatants than the representatives of heaven and of hell — Christ the Anointed King of Zion, and him, who with

“Immortal vigor, tho’ oppress’d and fallen,
 . . . from despair
 . . . aspires,
 . . . insatiate to pursue
 Vain war with heaven.”

Having fasted forty days, whether by a supernatural abstinence from all nourishment, or in a very meagre and insufficient use of such food as the desert might supply, we are not concerned to inquire particularly — the Redeemer was assailed by the three exceedingly ingenious and enticing seductions of which the Evangelists have made record. The devil, taking advantage of Christ’s long fast, proposed to him to remove his famished condition by a miracle. Command these stones to be made bread, if thou be the Son of God. Satisfy the cravings of exhausted nature, and at the same time show by so doing your Divine character. Christ, in his reply, exposed the sinfulness of this artful proposal. He brought forward this Christian doctrine — that in every command of God, in every leading of Providence, a promise is implied of all needful support to the obedient. Christ was doing his Father’s work ; and he would not so distrust the care of Providence over him — that God could spread a table for him even in that wilderness — as to take into his own hands directly the satisfying of these bodily wants. To have

The second.

Pinnacles.

A Jewish opinion.

done this, in the circumstances, would have been to undervalue and practically deny the truth of a providential superintendence of men, and of God's special regard to his faithful servants.

Unable to draw the Saviour into this act of practical atheism, the next effort of Satan was to induce him to rely on that Divine care and protection to an unwarranted extent. Failing on one side, he passes dexterously to the opposite extreme. From the desert, the scene is transferred to a high battlement of the temple in Jerusalem, no very far distance as we have seen ; and Christ is incited to throw himself down amidst the crowds below ; that being up-borne from harm by angelic aid, all might behold and confess the proof of his Messiahship. "Pinnacles of the temple," says Matthew Henry, "are places of temptation. High places are slippery places." So many have found it, by a fatal fall. But Christ held his footing as firmly there as before in the wilderness. Though Satan fortified his advances by a Scripture quotation — a favorite stratagem of his — he had not now our mother Eve to deal with. Christ saw in that promise of help from God through his attendant angels, no apology for a rash presumption. He resisted ; and that with the knowledge undoubtedly of an opinion current among the Jews, that their expected deliverer would, in fact, descend from the air in a visible form to effect their national emancipation. This must have given new force to the suggestion of the Evil One ; yet with a firmness beyond betrayal, Christ threw off the wily proposal with the sublimely simple and effective reply ; "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Once more our Lord permitted his seducer to conduct him to the wilderness, and with him ascended the mountain, some two thousand feet high, already mentioned. Here, by a close assault upon the Saviour, Satan endeavored to arouse

Quarantania.

"The world."

The fiend baffled.

his ambition and secure his fall. From the summit of Quarantania, the several kingdoms of Palestine and the vicinity were discernible. The principalities of Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, Auranitis, and Trachonitis, in which Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, sons of Herod, bore regal sway ; all these and the borders of yet more remote sovereignties lay in one grand panorama beneath their eye. Claiming the disposal of earthly honors, Satan offered all this dominion and glory to the Son of God, if he would but fall down and worship him as his superior. It was a subtle attempt to light a flame of secular, political ardor in his breast whose "kingdom was not of this world." Vain attack upon his virtue who was not seeking on earth a material crown and sceptre ; who saw, in that broad landscape, but a part of the creation which, as the Eternal Word, he had "in the beginning" spoken into existence ; who knew that over its disposing Satan held no control. The indignation of the Son of God — earth's Maker and Satan's Lord — was stirred by the insolent proposal. And sternly did he utter that indignation and assert that supremacy, in the rebuke which drove from his presence his defeated foe, "Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The fiend was unmasked, vanquished.

" ——— abashed the devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is."

Leaving the subject of our narrative, for the present, in company with those ministering angels who came to his succor on the retreat of the tempter, let us meditate briefly upon the incidents just reviewed.

We may learn, from this part of our Saviour's life, what value to place on the pursuits of a merely temporal ambition.

The dissatisfactions of ambition.Shakespeare.

The first thirty years of human existence ordinarily find the heart of man deeply enlisted in some enterprise for worldly popularity and self-elevation, eagerly grasping at the glittering baubles of time. How many sleepless hours of thought and exertion does the ardent temper of the young expend in the commencing chase of this world's prizes. But Christ, who knew perfectly the worth of all that fame, and dominion, and troops of fawning flatterers can command for their possessor, who saw as open a path to these acquisitions before him, as before any, chose to pass the first stage of his manhood in a lowly but contented sphere; nor could be bribed by his crafty enemy to exchange that unambitious spirit for its dazzling but dissatisfying opposite. He knew what some others know but heed not, that a conspicuous eminence in the eye of man is not necessarily the procurer of happiness; that the mount of human glory is like some other mounts — the higher you ascend, the scantier and thornier becomes the vegetation, the rougher the climate, also. And by preferring the quiet vale of life, he, who never erred in his estimates, has written *vanity* on these aspirings and vauntings of mortal pride. Vanity and vexation is their just title, higher or lower be the scale of their manifestation. These vaultings into the seat of power, which gratify men's lust for rule, and astonish the less adventurous beholders,— read their true portrait from the great poet of human nature :

“O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
Who builds his hope in air of your fair looks,
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.”*

* Richard III. A. 3, S. 4.

Satan still active;but not omnipotent.

We behold, moreover, the dangers which surround the souls of men, while forming here their natures to good or evil. Their choices, their determinations are ever liable to be perverted by foreign and unholy agents. Satan is not far absent from us, still plying his deceptions. Now he presents the demands of the flesh, and by engrossing all care to its necessities or indulgence, strives to cheat the soul of all earnest regard. Would that such worldlings might learn the meaning of Christ's words to this same tempter — "Man shall not live by bread alone;" the animal, the sensual is not all of his constitution or wants, — "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." *These* are spirit and these are life. The applause, the fascinations of earth, dear to native unregeneracy, he still works upon to our undoing, as he would have us go on toiling to the end to feed our pining spirits on "husks which the swine did eat." We are advancing onward towards our changeless habitations beyond the grave, amidst a fearful array of liabilities to complete and everlasting destruction.

Yet it is a pleasing thought, that Satan with all his malice has no direct and resistless influence over us. He could not of himself cast down the Saviour from the temple's height. He could only try to persuade him *to throw himself* down. Nor can he ruin a single soul who steadfastly opposes his arts. His success is only that which the tempted yield him. Thanks to God, the decision of human destinies lies not in his keeping who has by sin turned his own deathless nature into a hell. The resolute soul can rob him of his power through Christ's victorious grace.

But here again the guilt of his final victims receives a *vas* accession. If bound to the throne of darkness, it will be their fault and theirs only. They might have withstood the deceiver. Their bondage was voluntary. They were led captive by

Man destroys himself.**False finger-boards.**

Satan because they were willing to be thus led. Self-destruction will be the crime of all the finally lost ; and this will be their chiefest woe, in the remorseful remembrance of a wasted probation.

Nor think that every suggestion is right, is safe, which comes under some semblance of scripture authority. Satan, to ensnare the world's Redeemer, could make a most respectful appeal to the inspired volume. Satan's servants, to ensnare the souls of men, can do the same. When, from Eden's fatal hour, has not error in religion prefaced its smooth delusions with the old assertion, "Yea hath God said?" The roads to despair eternal are many ; and over the entrance of each stands the false finger-board — "☞ This leads to heaven." Satan placed it there, and will keep it brightly lettered to the end. But walk not therein. Christ's narrow path of holiness and salvation alone will bring us where Christ is.

CHAPTER IV.

AND JESUS RETURNED IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT INTO GALILEE;
AND THERE WENT OUT A FAME OF HIM THROUGH ALL THE
REGION ROUND ABOUT.—LUKE.

PROCLAIMED at his baptism as the Son of God by a voice from heaven ; triumphant in the desert over the assaults of Satan ; publicly declared to the nation by his forerunner, John, to be the long looked for Messiah ; we are now to contemplate the vigorous entrance of Christ upon his mission of mercy and power among his countrymen. John was still to the east of Jordan, at Bethabara. Thither from the wilderness of his late fasting and conflicts, Jesus again betook himself. John had attached a small company of disciples to his person, as a religious teacher ; but with the true humility and self-forgetfulness of a heaven-directed spirit, careless of the diminution of his own importance, he points out the Saviour to these his followers as his superior and their Lord —“ The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” With the memory of the scene of Christ’s recent baptism fresh in their minds, this repeated testimony of their master to his more exalted character and office must have been regarded by these attendants of the Baptist as a virtual termination of his peculiar work ; as a formal transfer of his authority to his more illustrious successor. On the next day, therefore, two of John’s followers, Galileans by birth, put themselves in connection with Christ. One of these was Andrew. Finding his brother Simon, he brought him also to Jesus, as the Messiah. Christ received him as a disciple ; and because of the natural fortitude and foreseen devotedness

Commencement of Christ's family.

of this man, his name was changed to Cephas, or Peter, the one being the Hebrew, the other the Greek word for a Rock.

Intending to depart immediately to Galilee, Christ summoned Philip of Bethsaida to attend him. Philip obeyed the command; and in the joy of having found the Redeemer, communicated the glad news to Nathaniel, who seems to have been a very thorough adherent of Jewish opinions, and perhaps a doctor of the Mosaic law. He is supposed to be, with much probability, the disciple commonly known as Bartholomew. Desired by Philip to come and behold him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathaniel's prejudices for a moment were aroused by the common contempt of his class for everything of Galilean origin, and he gave expression to his incredulity in words which have unfortunately prolonged their echo even till now — "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But seeking an introduction to Christ, and convinced with the others of his just pretensions as Messiah, he avowed his conviction in the prompt, and honest, and noble declaration, which sealed his allegiance to the Saviour; "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Thus was constituted the nucleus of Christ's family of chosen friends. But these, thus early selected, did not at once attach themselves to him constantly, nor surrender their usual employments, though they stood prepared to do this at his bidding, as our narrative will hereafter disclose.

Here I pause a little, to gather a lesson or two of valuable instruction. We cannot but observe the unhesitating readiness of these men to weigh with candor the evidence of Christ's claims on their confidence and service, to obey directly the decisions of their judgments. It is a beautiful instance of rational, consistent conduct in the affairs of religion. We notice no reluctance to look at the challenge thus

An honest inquirer.An example to be copied.

thrown before them. Though Nathaniel gave utterance to one very narrow objection, he nevertheless, like a man, was willing to go and see for himself the merits of the case ; and he returned a believer. Would that many, who repeat his cavil, would but copy his example. We have here, on the other hand, no misplaced credulity, no weak consent. These men had proof which satisfied them that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. As such, they recognized his authority over them. When he called to them, "follow me," they heard a divine voice in those tones, and cheerfully complied. Before the force of evidence and the power of conscience, former inclinations and prejudices were sacrificed, and they became the affectionate servants of the Lord. How opposite this behavior to that, which, with far more knowledge and motive to direct and prompt than these possessed, resists the truth, cavils and contends against unanswerable arguments, struggles with conscience and God's Spirit, and finally settles down to the work of framing excuse after excuse to defer yet longer what it admits to be a most reasonable and necessary labor. How much of *this*, how little comparatively of *that* action do we behold. But can there be any doubt which course of life of these two will form the most pleasing subject of retrospection at the hour of death, at the day of judgment, and through eternal ages ? Did these young and ardent men ever regret their decision ?

A word here also to Christians. As soon as Andrew had found Christ, he brings his brother Simon to the same blessed friend. Philip had hardly joined himself to Jesus before he is leading his acquaintance, Nathaniel in the same path of obedience. Thus a brother saves a brother, a friend saves a friend. Thus piety multiplies itself, and God is honored as Christ is loved and trusted. Disciple of the same Master, you see your sacred calling, both within and without the

A word to Christians.

Cana.

A marriage-feast.

circle of your kindred connection. Human attachments should draw their subjects heavenward. General influence in society should be, with the Christian, a sanctifying influence. Are these so with you? And Andrew *found* his brother, and Philip *found* his friend — there was a going after, a search for the objects of this sympathy; in the latter case, at least, there was a judicious, kind, successful overcoming of reluctant feeling. *He brought him to Jesus.* Godlike work! Eternity shall tell how measurelessly this has transcended, in spiritual dignity and value, all the other work which the crowded history of human activity has recorded.

Three days from these incidents, Christ, with a part of these just-selected followers, made his appearance in Cana of Galilee, distant about fifty miles from the place of his last interview with John the Baptist, and some six miles north of Nazareth.* Here a marriage-festival was in preparation, to which Jesus, his mother, and his disciples were invited. The entertainments on these occasions, among the Jews, generally continued several days. It is conjectured by some that the failure of the wine, at this feast, was caused by the arrival of Christ's company near the termination of the festivities. However this may be, there was a deficiency of this part of the provision for the guests. Christ's mother reported to him the fact. We infer from the narrative, that this was accompanied by a suggestion to her son, to distinguish himself by an act of divine power before the large assembly here gathered. His reply savors somewhat of rebuke, — "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

There is much more of harshness in our version of this response than in the original. As it stands there it carries

* Robinson's Palestine III., pp. 207-8.

"Woman."

The first miracle.

A frequent folly.

the idea, in milder phrase, that if it were proper for him to work a miracle on this or any occasion, the inducement must spring not even from a mother's wishes or asking, but from a supreme regard to the accomplishment of his mission of redemption. He could not, as Son of God, be swayed by the solicitations of merely human love. It may be added, that the word "woman," as here used, with an appearance to us of disrespect, conveys no such idea in the East. Thomas Scott well remarks, that not only princesses are thus addressed by their attendants, but that Christ from the cross, in most affectionate tenderness, spake to his mother, and by the same title committed her to the beloved disciple — "Woman, behold thy son."

But although Christ could not be induced to perform a miracle simply to gratify the solicitations of the most intimate friendship, he saw in this exigency a fit opportunity to display his mighty power, the seal of his divinity. This controlling of the natural sequence of cause and effect, for the authenticating of his commission from God, forms so marked a feature of Christ's movements on earth, that, at this its first exhibition, it may be well to offer a few explanatory suggestions. It is to be observed, then, that everything which is preternatural, or outside of our range of comprehension, is not supernatural, or miraculous. It may be entirely unaccountable to us, and yet not be entitled to our credit as a voucher of religious facts or doctrine. A supernatural event must work in harmony with right, with holiness, with what we consciously know of the will of God, to be looked upon as a certificate from him endorsing a system of spiritual faith. It is exceedingly idle and foolish to catch at every strange occurrence, every wonder-stirring noise, or mysterious interruption of common incidents, and call it a miracle, and begin to question it for some new revelation of things beyond the

 Logic of miracles.

Counterfeits.

Their suspension.

grave. Be sure that God interferes not thus except on occasions worthy of a God's interference thus. And with this undoubted canon of interpretation, we readily set aside, as unworthy of a moment's religious regard, the whole catalogue of Popish, Mormon, and spirit-rapping miracles. A true miracle is to be regarded not as an exhibition merely of Almighty power, but equally and necessarily of Divine benevolence, wisdom, holiness ; for God's attributes always work in self-consistent unison. A preternatural act which cannot abide this test, may still be something very marvellous, inexplicable. But it belongs to some other department of wonders than those which Infinite Perfection publishes, as the sanction of his declared will.

The immediate necessity of Christ's miraculous acts was — the universal expectation of such acts among the Jews from their Messiah. This we know historically was to them an indispensable sign of the Messiahship.* And, as if to make most conspicuous Christ's title thereto on this very ground, it was providentially arranged, that for four hundred years before his advent, the manifestation of miraculous agency was suspended in that nation. John the Baptist even laid no claim to this endowment. Thus did the mighty deeds of Jesus burst upon the world as a new dispensation of God-like authority, dignity, majesty ; glorious in itself, most illustrious also in contrast with the complete absence, beyond memory, of any similar displays of Deity. If, however, after all, that people were blind to this clearest realization of their own desires and anticipations, the fact but shows that even such testimony to truth may be rejected ; that there are subtle processes of unbelief, and strong under-currents of sinful inclinations, fully equal to the neutralizing of all permanent

 * John 7: 81.

Laws of the miraculous.

Good wine.

Jewish custom.

impression upon the soul of the most positive and magnificent interposition of God in the natural world, to give his approval to truth, his enforcement to duty. We shall have occasion to recur to this topic.*

The miracle at Cana was on this wise. Commanding the servants at the wedding-feast to fill with water six of the large stone jars, used in the frequent purifications of the Jews,† Christ then bade them draw off the water, which they did in the form of genuine, unsuspected wine. If this water had been poured through vessels which had contained wine previously, there might have been some color for the idea that it was only to a slight degree impregnated, by contact, with a vinous taste. But these were *water*, not wine jars. Besides, this new supply of wine was carried at once to the master of the entertainment, who, unconsciously perhaps, but fully attested the miracle by the remark to the bridegroom, that, on such occasions, the best wine is commonly used first, and the poorest last; but here it was reversed, for he "had kept the good wine until now." And, what an Orientalist means by *good* wine may be inferred from this custom, which perhaps is as ancient as our text,—on the birth of a child, the father buries a jar of wine in the earth, sealed closely, which remains there until that child is

* The *basis* of the miraculous is God's absolute control of physical nature. Its *method* is not the running *counter* to natural laws, but the running *above* them—an effect independent of their common or normal action, exalted above this, produced by special Divine interference, and not otherwise producible. God does nothing *contrary* to nature; for to say that the operative causes in nature, while still remaining the same in kind, produce essentially different effects, is to say that a thing may be the same and different at the same time. The *design* of a miracle is to reveal God to the souls of men. Its *possibility* is proved by the creation of matter itself, which is the greatest of all supernatural works. These distinctions are at least as old as Thomas Aquinas.

† Mark 7: 3, 4.

 Christ's domestic sympathies.

 The family-tie.

married, when it is disinterred to grace the wedding board.* We presume there was nothing spurious here.

In this miracle we catch the reflection of a few pleasant and suggestive thoughts. It shows Christ's human sympathies. His interference spared that young bridal pair from what, in their situation, would have been a source of deep shame and mortification. But, more than this, it again put the highest honor, the divinest sanction on the family institution; it consecrated the close alliances, the sweet enjoyments of the home circle, in opposition to all the pretended superior virtue of a solitary, ascetic life, whether among Christ's ministers or other disciples; in opposition, too, to the socialistic theory and practice of merging the family into the community. It stands as a perpetual protest against whatsoever, in history or philosophy, has put disrespect and restraint on the divinely instituted basis of human association, "They twain shall be one flesh."

By this signal control of natural laws, Christ "manifested forth his glory." If the line, translated out of an early hymn of the Latin Church, verges on rhetorical extravagance —

"The conscious water saw its God and blushed;"†

its theology is true to the Christian idea. He revealed himself in godlike authority to the admiring witnesses of his superhuman achievement. "His disciples believed on him." It is a favorite idea of some commentators, also, that under this change of water to wine, as of a *lower* to a *higher* organism, Christ designed to give a symbol of the whole intended working of his remedial grace in human nature, and social

* Bush's Illustrations.

† Aqua conscia Deum vidit, et rubescit.

The wine question.

relations, elevating and energizing that which is common, to the highest purposes and honors of his kingdom. So a recent writer remarks, that as the first plague inflicted by Moses on Egypt was the turning of *water* into *blood* — a fit emblem of a dispensation of legal and judicial severity; Christ's opening miracle was the changing of *water* into *wine* — a mete inauguration of his ministration of life — the reign of joy and gladness.*

It will probably be expected that I pass not onward without bestowing a notice upon another topic involved in this incident — the sanction given by Christ to the use of what we consider a dangerous beverage. The coarse imputation that our Gospel makes Jesus furnish an additional supply of wine, to help out a drunken frolic, is a poor and wholly gratuitous perversion of the remark of the master of the feast. Concerning the genuineness of this wine, I have already stated my belief and its reason. I now observe, that had the use of this liquid been confined to occasions like the one under review — occasions of joy chastened and hallowed by the religious spirit — there would have been no need to place such restrictions upon its consumption as the protection of virtue now demands. In such limits it would have been harmless. If, under the present customs of society, it is thought to be perilous even at a marriage-feast, it is because having become the inlet to habitual dissipation, no safety can be found to many but in its entire abandonment — no absolute safety and defence. Nor can any reasoning be more unfair than, from the occasional employment of wine by our Lord at a sacred festival, to infer the propriety of its common indulgence. By some, the attempt has been made to press into the same service the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. I need spend no

* Trench on the Miracles.

The wine question.

time in showing the rank impiety which marks such a spirit. They who would sanction their intemperance by the example of Christ or of Christ's ordinances, should remember his solemn warning against being overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness;* should recollect his exclusion of the drunkard by name from the kingdom of heaven;† should hear the fearful threatening of Jehovah addressed to them — Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts. Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue till night, till wine inflame them.‡

From the pertinacity with which this incident is quoted by persons of free habits to justify their excesses; and by the moderate drinker, to shelter the gratification of a pleasant appetite; one would suppose that a direct command existed to "go and do likewise." But, in the existing state of society, it is not safe. The wrecks of multitudes who have gone back to, or into intemperate habits, from sipping no more than a wedding-glass, proclaim that even *this is not safe*. These are cases in which good men, with the principles of Christian benevolence and self-denial before them, are bound to consult the welfare of the community. And were Christ now on earth, when the friends of virtue are waging a war of extermination against the deadliest foe of his kingdom — *the spirit of drunkenness* — who can doubt but that he would lead on the very van of a movement which his own truth and providence, in these last days, have put in motion for the rescue of men from vice and ruin?

In a word, we recognize here one of those practices which

* Luke 21:34. † 1 Cor. 6:10. ‡ Is. 5:11-22.

Passover.

Traffic in the temple.

Christ cleanses it.

although abstractly *lawful* is *not expedient*. We find here the proper, the binding application of the Apostle's godlike maxim ; " It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to *drink wine*, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

The great annual festival of the Jews was now at hand. Jesus, having opened his ministry in a secluded and humble field, left Galilee and came to Jerusalem, as well to comply with a national obligation, as to proclaim his mission to the crowds assembled at the Passover. This feast, being celebrated by an immense number of sacrifices, created an extraordinary increase of traffic in cattle and the other required offerings. By the testimony of Josephus, 256,500 victims were sometimes slain at a single passover. The temple-courts had become the market-place of this vast trade. There the dealers in oxen, sheep, doves, and the exchangers of money had set up their stalls, where with extortion, and profane noise, they carried on their several employments. At this shameless impiety, the indignation of Christ was aroused. With a whip of small cords, he, alone and unprotected, assailed this crowd of passionate worldlings ; drove them from the courts of Jehovah with the beasts which they sold ; and overturned the tables of the money-changers with this perhaps not altogether incomprehensible though unexpected rebuke ; " Take these things hence, and make not my Father's house a house of merchandize."

Contrasting the disproportionate power of one humble, unguarded man with that of a large, resentful and enraged company of unprincipled people, we have here an occurrence not much inferior to a miracle. To have effected so readily his purpose, Christ must have exhibited an authority, a majesty, more than human. There was, we suppose, a divine energy displayed in his action, clothed in a radiance of

Still jealous of its purity.How now profaned.

glory not unlike that which crowned his person on the mount of Transfiguration, which struck consternation into the objects of his displeasure, and disarmed all resistance. It was a bold declaration of his Messiahship in the very midst of his enemies, a worthy proclamation of his Deity in the polluted, insulted sanctuary of his Father. It was a fearless and open protest against the whole temper and tendency of the low, secular, political religious spirit of the times. It was a sweeping condemnation of all attempts to serve God with an outside zeal of devotion, from which has departed the inward life of a heartfelt worship.

Christ's concern for the purity of his spiritual temple, his church, is not less ardent than that which here manifested itself in so severe indignation against the polluters of his ancient courts. If he would not tolerate those, will he suffer in his church that which defiles it, which dishonors his name, which starts the scornful jest, the profane sneer against his cause, his person? How does he regard the pretender to religion, who covers, with a cloak of godliness, a heart of sin? the heedless backslider, who has a name to live, but is dead? He abhors their presence as he knows their guilt. For a time, they may continue to disgrace the company of his people, to wound him in the house of his friends. But a day approaches when judgment must begin at the house of God. Christ will purge it of everything which defileth. The hypocrite's hope will perish. Judas will go again to his own place. Who will stand when Christ the Judge thus cometh? He will be "like a refiner's fire." Alas! for those whose gold was but dross; whose certificate of discipleship was only a counterfeit. Their hope shall be like a spider's web. Sinners, in covenant with Christ's people, may escape the discipline of the church on earth. This is a small

Pretences.

The letter in the postscript.

ambition. Christ's scourge, when once he shall lift it over their heads, will administer a discipline which will divide the righteous and the wicked as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

"Time shall unfold what plated cunning hides;
Who cover faults, at last them shame derides."

The profaning of Christ's temple is not, however, confined to flagrant transgressions in his avowed friends. Much there is that offends him which eludes probably all notice save his own. The heart is very deceitful in disguising from itself the real springs of its own actions. As one has quaintly, but to the life, observed, "The pretence of a good design is made to cover many sins. Thus some believe covetousness allowable, if they greedily heap up treasure with a professed purpose to build churches and charitable institutions; and acts of revenge come near to piety, if it be to the ruin of an ungodly man; and indirect proceedings are made sacred, if they be for the good of the holy cause. This is profaning the temple with beasts brought for sacrifices. And but that our hearts are treacherous, we should easily perceive that *the greatest business of the letter is written in the postscript*, the greatest pretence is the least purpose, and the latent covetousness, or unholy desire, or the secular appendix is the main engine to which the end of religion is made instrumental and pretended." Nothing of this duplicity can pass the challenge of God's holiness. He demands truth in the soul. A Christian, thus submitting himself to these subtle deceivings, may expect that Christ will scourge out of him this spirit of evil by no very lenient methods.

Let me advise the avowedly irreligious, also, that they too must feel the rod of this same indignation of Christ against

A word to the irreligious.

all ungodliness, if they persist in thus putting the world and sin above the soul and piety. It is of this very folly that inspiration has written — “Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.” Shall that have foothold and welcome in heaven, which Christ expelled from his temple on earth, with a severity so decisive and irresistible?

CHAPTER V.

A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK, AND SMOKING FLAX SHALL HE NOT QUENCH, TILL HE SEND FORTH JUDGMENT UNTO VICTORY. AND IN HIS NAME SHALL THE GENTILES TRUST.—MATTHEW.

THIS, with its previous context, is one of the citations made by the Evangelists from the numerous prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures respecting the Messiah. In the prophet,* it forms part of a very beautiful delineation of the purity, gentleness, yet heroic fortitude of the coming Emanuel. Comparing the passages as they stand in the Gospel and in Isaiah, we see that there are very considerable discrepancies between their respective modes of expression, although the ideas conveyed are substantially the same. This is true of other references to earlier Scriptures by the New Testament writers. Hence, a difficulty has been raised out of these variations of the same text, as though they involved a want of accuracy, prejudicial to the claim of inspiration by those who wrote these pages. To this topic, I shall here devote a few observations.

Much of the application of citations from the Old Testament in the New is merely by way of allusion or illustration, with no special regard to the fulfilment of such quotations, when prophetic, by the incident to explain or enforce which they are adduced.† This remark has respect not so much to verbal disagreements as to the intention of an inspired passage. Where a text appears to be cited from a former by a subsequent writer, attention must be given to the object in view — whether it be the same as that of the original author,

* Isaiah, 42.

† The phrase, "was fulfilled," is not to be *strictly* taken always.

or only involve a casual resemblance of language. A careful inspection of this kind will often relieve the entire objection.

With respect to verbal differences in these citations where the point of reference is the same, it would seem that the New Testament writers by no means aimed to copy exactly the Scriptures which they adopted from more ancient records. Their design was to extract and use the sense of a text, and often, as from a seed, to develop a fuller and richer meaning than its former was understood to convey. Again, it is highly probable that Christ and the Apostles did not make use so much of the Hebrew Old Testament as of the Greek Septuagint, a translation made by Alexandrine Jews some centuries prior to the Saviour's advent. This version, although accurate as to the ideas of the Hebrew writings in the main, changed the forms of language employed, as every translation must. But, if this version was their common text-book, they did not adhere with unerring constancy to its phrases, though often they give its precise words. It is evident that the disciples and their Master were in the habit of quoting from memory, in their discourses and conversations. Thus we continually cite from familiar documents or books, with more or less verbal precision, the drift of the reference being alone regarded. The Inspiring Spirit might indeed have easily secured, in every case of allusion to a previous Scripture, a rigid reproduction of its very terms. But this would have answered no valuable end, and therefore has not been done. Even in this comparatively unimportant matter, Christianity, true to its spirit, discards *the bondage of the letter*. But this liberty of language involves no contradictions of facts or sentiments.*

* Cf., on this topic, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. XI. p. 569, *et seq.*

One other subject of similar nature requires notice before we proceed further. The four Gospels profess to exhibit the life of Christ on earth. But they are very diverse in their records of that life. Some incidents are given by all; some, by only one or two of the Evangelists. There is also a want of entire conformity in the arrangement of the several events narrated. The doubt thus suggested as to their truthfulness vanishes, by observing that it was not the purpose of any one of the accounts to detail an entire history of its subject. Each of the four had a specific end in view in penning his memoir, and recorded those notices of Jesus and those of his instructions, which best suited that end. Thus Matthew wrote the earliest, and for the particular benefit of the Hebrews. Consequently, he has omitted some matters of little advantage to their introduction into the Christian faith, expanding other topics to greater breadth. Mark and Luke wrote for Gentile converts, under the ministry of Peter and Paul. This gives to their records some distinctive characteristics. Circumstances well known to a Jew, and hence omitted by Matthew, are marked with much minuteness in the Gentile gospels, because unknown to these nations and thus requiring explanations. A careful reader will discover these discriminations without great difficulty. John composed his Gospel as a supplement to the three who had preceded him; inserting whatever was needful to fill out the symmetrical proportions of the whole,—particularly amplifying and completing the reports of Christ's discourses, which in the earlier Evangelists seem to be little more than mere synopses or skeletons of his trains of thoughts. This is the only intelligible way in which to view these narrations. Together and in harmony, they constitute the Saviour's biography. Some things are told by all in the same manner. Some with more fulness of detail by one than the rest.

The spirit of inspiration.Unity of variety.

Some are passed by altogether except by one narrator. But all, inserted into each other, like a skilfully framed house made to be morticed together, form one harmonious whole — an edifice with no superfluous parts, no unsightly, incongruous excrescences.

Nor is there in this explanation any thing repugnant to the common usages of men. Let any illustrious personage live, and when departed, let four of his personal companions sit down, apart from all intercourse, to compose his memoirs. Will any two coincide entirely in the scenes selected for description, and in the fulness of detail indulged? But may not each narrative, nevertheless, be guardedly authentic? Nor does it effect this statement, that the evangelists wrote under Divine guidance; for it is always characteristic of Inspiration, that it moulds itself to all the natural modes in which human thoughts express themselves. Preparing a Bible for men, God has shaped its whole contour to the mental habitudes of men, that it may speak to them as they are wont to speak to each other; yet with a purity, an accuracy, an authority, divinely superior to every thing of a mere mortal origin. One of the most graceful charms of Revelation is, that, instead of flowing along like some artificial canal in a straight line from beginning to end, and with banks walled up with hard masonry, it winds its picturesque course like a clear, bright stream through the flowery meadows, doubling and turning in a thousand lovely curves; here hiding itself in some shadowy sedge, there flashing its silvery surface under the summer sun. To conclude this matter, if any circumstance could show, with demonstrative force, that between the writers of the Gospels, no collusion, no concerted forgery, no attempted imposition existed, it is this very want of exact sameness of delineation. If, in Christ's recorded life the whole work had been brought down to a

A visitor at night.Timid but sincere.

tame, straightforward uniformity of detail, we should have never heard the end of the charge, that it was all an artful contrivance of his disciples, conspiring together to palm off on the world a labored fraud for their own advantage. As it is, divinity reveals itself conclusively in this *unity of variety*.

We left the Saviour scourging from the temple the profane polluters of its sanctity. A few conversions to his cause in Jerusalem followed the scenes of this Passover ; * which were also instrumental in bringing to our Lord one inquirer at least for salvation from the most influential class of Jewish society. This person was Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a man of education and high standing as a religious teacher and civil ruler.† His visit to Christ bears all the indications of a sincere desire to know the truth concerning his person and mission. He came not to cavil but to learn ; evidently far convinced already that this was the commencement of a new and most momentous period in the spiritual history of his race. Yet in his coming “by night” to Jesus, undoubtedly for purposes of concealment, we see the remains of former prejudices, and the timidity of a mind held firmly in the grasp of an adverse popular opinion. He must converse with the Saviour on this topic which was agitating the thinking part of the community ; but he must do it so as not to compromise himself with his order. How true to human nature is this description, how interesting this gradual loosening away from old error, this awakening of an earnest spirit to the realities and demands of a revelation of duty from God. We can treat gently this weakness of fear, which sought the veil of evening’s shadows to make its first approach to the Redeemer, when we find afterwards its issue

* John 2:23.

† John 3:1, 10. — 7:50.

Nicodemus.

The conversation.

Entering the kingdom.

in a manly confession of sympathy with the persecuted Nazarene, that shrunk not from his defence in the light of day and amid the armed satellites of hostile violence. There was another visit which Nicodemus made to Jesus, some three years later ; and then it was, with other bereaved friends, to embalm for the sepulchre the crucified body of that wondrous man,* who had told him, on that memorable night of their first interview, how only a sinner, whether high or low, learned or unlearned, can enter the kingdom of heaven, the fellowship of the holy.

This was the theme of their conversation. Upon it Christ immediately entered, explaining its points and meeting difficulties, kindly, firmly, with clear discrimination and impressive authority. The substance of his discourse was this — that the kingdom of God was to be entered and enjoyed, not by any national or official standing in the line of Abraham as the Jews supposed, but by being “born again” of the truth and Spirit of God ; that circumcision availed nothing, but a new creature. Christ told this “master in Israel,” that himself should be lifted up, as was the serpent of Moses, that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life ; that this his own advent among men was the provision of the love of God, that the world through him might be saved ; that, to refuse belief in him was to perpetuate forever the personal condemnation in which sin had involved every human soul. And yet another thought our Lord suggested, with admirable timeliness to meet the scepticism which these strange announcements were perhaps starting in his auditor’s intelligent mind — “he that doeth truth cometh to the light ;” that is, the surest way to gain a comprehension of religious doctrine, to gain a deliverance from

* John 19: 39.

Faith in order to knowledge.

Christ goes northward.

religious doubts, is to yield heartily, lovingly to the sway of a sincerely religious spirit. To *do* the truth is to *see* the truth, to come into fuller light. What a vast amount of our prevailing modes of disbelief and misbelief upon spiritual subjects would vanish, if men would only be willing to obey what they know to be right. But then they would no longer be impenitent. And impenitency is what they supremely love.*

To the vicinity of the Jordan Christ now once more proceeded, where some months were occupied in teaching and baptizing, with his disciples. Soon after, John was cast into prison by Herod's tyranny. Christ, having heard of this event, passed northward from Judea towards Galilee. Crossing the intermediate district of Samaria, on reaching about noon the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar, he sat down beside it to rest his wearied limbs, while his disciples went to the market-place to purchase food. This noted locality is still distinctly traceable not far from one-third of an hour's distance from the modern village of Nabulus, the ancient

* It is noticeable how distinctly this idea of belief, love, obedience *in order to knowledge* — *fides in rationem* — enters into the system of the great church-teachers of the 12th and 13th centuries, as Anselm, Bernard, Hugo, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas. Anselm gives us its key-note when he says, "He who believes not will not experience, and he who has not experienced will not understand." Alexander of Hales affirms, "In other sciences — scientific knowledge precedes conviction; while the reverse holds true of religious matters. It is not till we have appropriated them by faith, that we can attain to a knowledge of them conformable to reason. These things can only be understood by those who are of a pure heart; and of this purity we become possessed by keeping God's commandments." He adds the following good motto for a *theological course*. "*Hæc scientia magis est virtutis quam artis*:" — this science is more a *matter of heart than of head*. If this thought be liable to perversion, nevertheless it contains a profound and perhaps a timely truth. Compare Neander's Ch. Hist., vol. IV. pp. 360-440.

 Samaria.

Jacob's well.

A deadly quarrel.

Samaria, or Sychar. The well is cut through the hard rock, to the depth of one hundred and five feet, by a diameter of nine. Maundrell found in it in March fifteen feet of water.* It was indeed very deep. While reclining here, a woman of the neighboring city came forth to draw water, of whom Christ requested a draught to allay his thirst. It is to be noticed that, in Eastern lands, public reservoirs of water are not furnished with an apparatus for drawing up their contents; otherwise Christ might have supplied his own wants. Travellers and all who come to these wells to drink bring their own vessels, commonly a small leathern bucket.† With this convenience Christ was not provided. Hence his application to this woman.

Perceiving that the stranger was a Jew, the woman replied to his respectful wish, by giving a free expression of the hatred of her people towards the Hebrews of Judea; reminding him, in no very measured terms, that between these two countries there existed no friendly intercourse. That there was strictly no dealing between them was not true, for at that very time the disciples were in the city on this special business. But for ages it had passed into a common law to exchange no offices of kindness with their contemned neighbors. The deadly feud between these adjoining provinces originated in a religious contention, and was marked with the usual acrimony of these contests concerning the forms of faith and worship, where the substance and spirit of piety have departed. When the king of Assyria had overrun the kingdom of Israel, and had transferred most of the inhabitants to his own land, a colony of Assyrians was sent to Samaria to mingle with the remaining Israelites and to repopulate the country. A priest of Jehovah was also despatched

 * Robinson's Palest. III. 107-9.

† Bush's Illustrations.

 Its origin and character.

 Its consequences.

thither to teach them the institutions of their fathers; yet idolatry prevailed.* Some time subsequently, Manasseh, high priest at Jerusalem, connected himself in marriage with the daughter of Sanballat,† governor of Samaria under Darius. Being compelled to fly from Judea on account of the indignation of the Jews at this dishonoring of his priestly office by a heathen alliance, Manasseh repaired to his father-in-law at Samaria; and still further the schism which had already commenced between these people was driven on by a refusal of the Jews to join the Samaritans in erecting a temple for their common use, and at their joint expense.‡ This recreant priest now built a temple on Mt. Gerizim, claimed the true succession from Aaron, and established there the rites of the Mosaic law. This feature marked the Samaritan creed — that they received no part of the Hebrew Scriptures as canonical but the five books of Moses. The quarrel thus determined was at once assumed by the two nations, and entailed to successive generations as a legacy of mutual recriminations, and often of fatal violence. Bloodshed and murder had been the frequent result of the encounters of these hostile claimants of the authorized worship of Jehovah. Consequently, the surprise of this woman of Samaria at the request of Christ, and her quick assumption of her people's cause against a Jew. For, though the controversy had lost something of its keenness in the lapse of time, it still had life enough in it to provoke a collision, to sharpen a rejoinder.

But Christ did not thus answer this ill-natured challenge. Indifferent as this individual showed herself to the commonest claims of hospitality, Christ did not retort an unkind answer. By a skilful turn to the conversation, he aroused her curiosity by saying how readily he would have given

 * 2 Kings 17:27-29.

† Neh. 13:28.

‡ Calmet, p. 807.

Christ superior to national jealousies. Would not dispute with the woman.

her, for the mere asking, that water which forever quenches the spirit's thirst. She, supposing him to refer to the water before them, expressed her wonder how he could make good that offer, having nothing to draw with, and the well being deep. Then, falling back upon her national prejudices, again she recurred to the question between the two countries ; and having, from Christ's otherwise unaccountable knowledge of her private history, mistrusted that he was a prophet, she sought to involve him in a dispute on this vexed subject : " Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Notice just here, that one of the most frequent arts of the impenitent, when pressed with unpleasant closeness by truth, in personal conversation, is to glide off upon some side-play of controversy about secondary matters. Christians should guard against this stratagem ; or efforts commenced for the spiritual good of the unconverted, will end most likely in a profitless and perhaps a heated argument concerning points, which may, indeed, be much more important than the Samaritan's dogma, but thus debated will produce no valuable consequences. As a general rule, it is of no use to argue religious topics with those who evidently wish by this means either to discharge their enmity against the truth, or to cover a retreat from its pursuing sword. Christ's example is the right one. Though doubtless aware of the error of the Samaritans, and of the rectitude of his tribe in this thing, he chose not now to expose the one, or to assert the other. He was aiming at a sinner's conscience, and he reached it. He did, it is true, in a single word, set the question of God's worship where it should be ; but only to bear home upon his hearer's heart the spirituality of its nature and claims, as the glorious thought glowed upon his lips, that soon all these narrow alienations would be abolished, and wherever a right indwelling

Christ's treatment of a "sinner."

disposition should be found, there should Jehovah also find a fit temple for his praise. This was to be the triumph of grace through the Messiah — Saviour. And with convincing authority, Jesus revealed himself to the thoroughly aroused woman — "I that speak unto thee am He."

Let us linger yet a moment to contemplate this scene. It is full of suggestiveness. With what ease and readiness did Christ adapt himself to the most opposite classes of human feeling and character. Here is one study; wearied with his dusty foot-march, he is resting an hour in the open fields, when there falls in his way a shrewd and inquisitive, but low-minded and depraved woman. His benevolence is instantly moved towards her spiritual well-being. Sectional partialities could not limit his sympathies. Nor did he despise her because that more than in a common sense, she was a "sinner." He did not intend to excuse the guilt, while still he was willing to take into account the weakness of too easily tempted humanity. He was alive to the value of her immortal soul — a priceless gem, though soiled in the mire of riotous passions. He knew her nature could be cleansed, and he attempted the godlike work. His disciples came back, wondering that he talked with *that* woman; it required much time to free their minds from a thralldom to unchristian modes of thought and feeling, which seem still to shackle the judgments of too many among ourselves. But Jesus lighted and fanned a flame of purer emotion and purpose in that neglected heart, with as much delight and eagerness of desire as though she had been one of the choicest daughters of his own people. A bruised reed he did not break, and smoking flax he did not quench.

"For while they sought the market-place,
His words had won a soul to grace,

A suggestive parallel.Jewish ruler and Samaritan woman.

And when he set that sinner free
From bonds of guilt and infamy,
His heart grew strong with joy divine,
More than the strength of bread and wine."

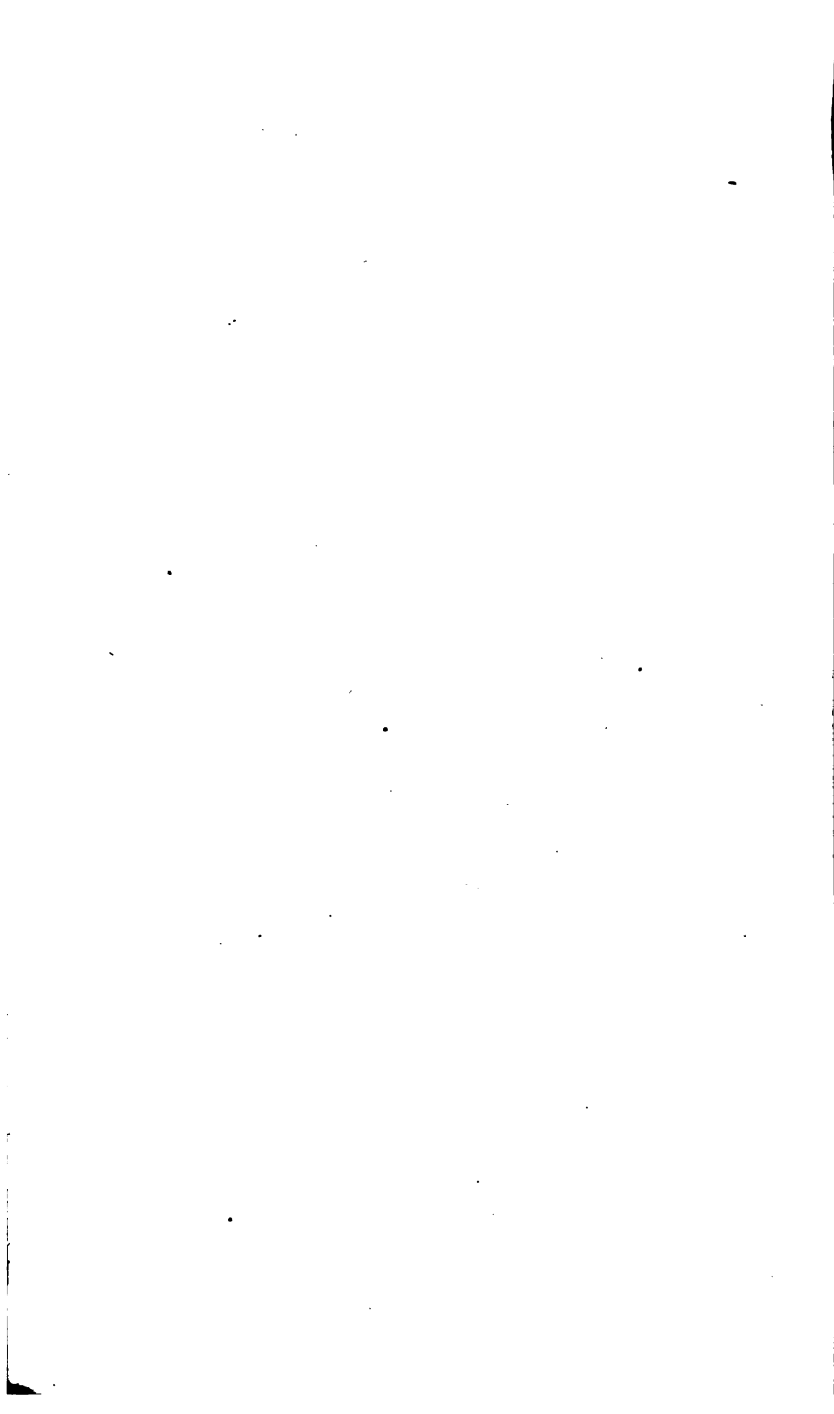
Penitence in any soul was dear to him. A tear of honest regret for sin, a smile of the conscious possession of forgiveness — these he sought for as the pearls of goodly price.

We see in this incident as much solicitude to make a convert to piety, and as much care in shaping his discourse to his hearer's special state, as when just now in Jerusalem Christ found an inquirer and learner in one of Israel's most honored rulers. Set aside the historic notices of these persons' social standing, and from Christ's manner towards them only, gather your estimate of their relative position. How true, that God is no flatterer, no respecter of mere superficial distinctions. I do not say that in one view, the conversion of individuals of great social power may not rightly be sought with an urgency commensurate with their means of usefulness; that is to say, because of a sincere and proper wish to enlist their greater influence on the side of Christ. Yet this principle needs to be very narrowly watched, to be most jealously guarded, lest it become a spirit of obsequious deference to the bare worldly consequence of its subjects, a carnal coveting of their alliance for purposes of display, rather than for God's augmenting honors, in the fruits of their regenerate lives. Before God, all souls are alike; as the soul of the master so the soul of the servant. Nowhere should this be more constantly realized than in dealing religiously with our fellow men. While everywhere we aim to exhibit Christ's gentleness and tenderness of treatment, we must not hesitate also to copy his direct, uncompromising fidelity to the truths of salvation, be it a learned, a titled

Fidelity and tenderness.A revival of religion.

Nicodemus, or be it an unknown Samaritan woman, who comes within the range of our efforts.

Faithfulness and kindness are not antagonists. In Christ they always kept company. How certainly we see it here, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." If this Samaritan's case was not beyond the reach of a melting compassionateness, whose should be despaired of? And it was not. She was won to virtue, to religion; others caught the sacred influence; multitudes flocked to Christ; though a Jew, he was urged to remain two days in their city where his nation was habitually cursed; he consented, and not a few of these apostates from Jehovah acknowledged him as their Redeemer and their Lord. It was a *revival* of religion, or rather an upspringing of religion where none existed to be *revived*. It was a scene like what the missionary to a neighborhood or a nation of benighted, vicious worldlings or idolaters witnesses, when, by God's help, his words strike home with saving power to disobedient souls, and light bursts forth in the region and shadow of death. Jerusalem had been passed by without this blessing, for she had not heeded these words of life. But despised Samaria had received the Great Teacher, and in her habitations his benediction abode. So now the Gospel rejected is leaving thousands of the "children of the kingdom" to outer darkness, where longest and most invitingly it has been preached — while the outcast offspring of sin and ignorance are flocking heavenward at the same summons.



CHAPTER VI.

FOR JESUS HIMSELF TESTIFIED, THAT A PROPHET HATH NO HONOR IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.—JOHN.

FROM Samaria, where his preaching had met so unexpected attention, Christ proceeded directly to Galilee. Here a person of rank in Herod's court came to him from Capernaum, to secure his help in behalf of a son lying dangerously sick in that city. We know nothing of this man's previous impressions concerning Jesus. We only know that trouble often induces its victims to go for relief where otherwise they never would have thought of betaking themselves. This brought the nobleman to our Lord. He came in a most earnest spirit of desire. We can easily picture to ourselves a father's emotion, as the plea trembles on his lip, "Sir, come down ere my child die!" There was here, moreover, some strength of confidence in Christ's power to arrest that disease. Christ answered that faith promptly, fully; "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The father believed the assurance, and ere his arrival home, was met by messengers of his household with the joyous tidings that, at the very hour when Jesus pronounced the youth's recovery, the fever left him. And himself believed, and his whole house.

Trouble, I say, brought this great man to Christ,—this *great man*; yet when the hand of God was on him, how much greater than his fellows did he seem to himself to be? Go into that lordly mansion, where, behind curtains of damask and gold, the heir of half a million, lies panting for life; or where the next of kin to hereditary honors is rendering

Affliction blessed.

Obey and trust.

Synagogues.

up his soul to Him who gave it. What a mockery is the outward luxury of wealth to the inward misery and poverty, in scenes like these. It is well if adversity sends us, from whatsoever conditions of plenty or want, to heaven for succor. But to gain substantial aid, we too must go in urgent importunity, for an immediate blessing; our prayer must have no wavering, save the tremulousness of its very intensity: it must be a believing prayer, that takes the Saviour at his word, that leans everything upon his faithfulness. Go thou to the Redeemer for thine own eternal salvation, in a disposition like this; leave such a plea for mercy at his cross; then rise and betake thee home to active, cheerful duty, not over anxious whether this hour or the next, tidings of divine acceptance shall assure thy hopes; and thus honoring God's truthfulness, thou, like the returning Galilean, shalt soon meet the messengers of good news, bringing to thy heart its precious answers of prayer made when in sorrow.

We next find the Saviour in Nazareth, the place of his former protracted residence. It was his habit to attend regularly the synagogue-worship of his countrymen. This institution had come into vogue chiefly at a time subsequent to the exile in Babylon. It answered a purpose not greatly unlike our sanctuary services. It did not admit of sacrifices, these being appointed for the temple in Jerusalem. Synagogues were numerous throughout Palestine and the Jewish colonies. A presiding officer offered prayers, all the people standing in a posture of respectful devotion. The law and the prophets were also read through every year; and the Scriptures were expounded to the people.* Besides this, the synagogue had a civil jurisdiction over certain classes of offences. Entering one of these places of worship at Naz-

* Calmet.

Nazareth.

A popular outbreak.

Why?

areth, the sacred writings were handed Christ to be read. It was the prophecy of Isaiah which was placed before him. This was a token of respect showed to persons of note, as to Paul and his fellow missionaries in Antioch.* The passage selected by Christ was the remarkable prediction of his own coming, by the prophet † — a graphic description of his work then transpiring beneath the very eyes of his unappreciating nation. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” What a text for what a preacher! Enough had been wrought already by him in this vicinity to make some startling impressions upon even these callous, inert minds. One of themselves as he was, and hence, according to the old proverb, but little likely to be much respected as a teacher, yet Christ could not read those few words to these Nazarenes without fastening upon himself the earnest gaze of all that were in the synagogue. It was a prediction of their own longed-for Messiah. Did they already more than half expect the application with which he commenced its exposition — “this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears?” And “Joseph’s son” as he was, when that bold announcement had been made, did they feel that it would be hard labor indeed for them to disprove this claim? We have here a most thrilling conflict of opposite emotions. In the very home of a thirty years’ retired and humble life, among his neighbors and family relatives, Jesus asserts his rank above all the past messengers of God to mankind. It is in the thronged sanctuary of

* Acts 13: 14, 15.

† Chapter 61.

Conscience and prejudice.Divine sovereignty.

their Sabbath worship. Now mark the changing shades of passion over these excited countenances; and hear their whispers of astonishment, their shouts of contempt; "Is not this Joseph's son?" "Is not this Jesus, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"* Yet there were heaven's marks about him, heaven's glory over him. Christ saw the struggle between conscience and prejudice in their bosoms. He saw and rebuked the despicable littleness of judgment which denies a prophet his just honors in his own country — a most irrational and ungenerous feeling which still has as much power as ever. He further saw here the operation of a great principle of God's discriminating sovereignty, which he immediately brought to bear upon the occasion. They, in their pride and resentment, were for demanding more miraculous proof of his Messiahship; "Do here what you have done elsewhere." That demand God would not gratify. He would give these demonstrations to whom he pleased; and oftenest to the least likely thus to be favored. In Israel, Elijah had been sent, in the sore famine, to succor a poor widow in Sarepta; and Elisha, to cleanse the leprosy of the heathen leader of Syria's armies. God suffers no man or people to put on him exactions for self-gratification. He dispenses gifts as a king, humbling the arrogant, honoring the lowly. This was Christ's discourse concerning himself, as the accomplishment of the prophecy which he had read. It aroused all the malignant sentiments of his townsmen's breasts, as still it sometimes makes sinners not a little angry. Filled with wrath, they thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the precipice whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But

* John 6: 42; parallel in sense, though not in time.

Christ will conquer.

Christ was immortal till his work was done. Overawing their rage, by supernatural power, or rendering himself invisible to them, he passed through the midst of them and went his way.

In this outburst of popular violence there is something which strikes us as peculiarly unjustifiable. It came from those who had the very best opportunities to know its wrongfulness. They had seen his miracles ; had seen a holy and an honest life beyond all suspicion of fraud ; had seen some at least convinced of his claims, and believing on him. But even his brethren of the same parents as himself were not yet of this number. Why this aversion, this rejection ? Take that inquiry along with you to the streets of Jerusalem, to the bar of Pilate, to Calvary, and repeat it there. Take it through later histories of converting mercy, of reviving grace, and repeat it there. Take it home to your own bosoms, you who have also copied the sin of these Galileans, and ask, why do your hearts persist in refusing the rightful dominion of Jesus ? Was the act of these pursuers of our Lord a criminal act ; did it indicate a disposition proud, revengeful, most foreign from goodness ? And what then, unconverted man, is your deed, and what character does it attach to your soul ? The main features of rebellion against heaven are everywhere the same ; one spirit moves the guilty purpose, since Satan led off the original revolt ; one doom of ruin and despair is its only possible termination. It carries ever its own reactionary destruction. Christ and his kingdom it cannot harm. Just as with divinest ease, he passed uninjured through this vengeful mob of his countrymen, so will he turn to nought all the counsels and onsets of his foes, walking like a conqueror over all their shattered enginery of malice ; while they, if finally unsubmitive,

The lake of Galilee.

Its scenery.

Parables.

must bear the weight of his indignant rebuke, his rod of judgment.

From Nazareth, whence as a prophet unhonored in his own country, he had been thus discarded, Christ now repaired to Capernaum. This town is situated near the upper extremity of the sea of Galilee. It was in the ancient borders of Zebulon and Napthali, and the residence of Jesus here fulfilled a prediction of Isaiah,* of that great light which this land and its people, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, should thus behold. The neighborhood of this city was a favorite resort of Christ. This body of inland waters, called variously by the names of Galilee, Tiberias, and Gennesareth, was the scene of some of the most interesting passages in his life. Embosomed amid ranges of lofty hills, from five to twelve hundred feet high, its deep seclusion, its bold and inspiring scenery afforded peculiar attractions to the meditative, devout spirit of the Son of God. Here he loved to wander in lonely thoughtfulness and communion with heaven. Here he wrought many mighty deeds of Godhead. Here he spake those briefest but most suggestive parables,† which have come down to us so richly laden with the seeds of the kingdom of grace — his own peculiar method of illustrating and enforcing spiritual truth. Here he took up again the old theme on which the prophets, and his own immediate predecessor had so often and earnestly insisted; and, as never man had preached before, he called on his generation to “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

While walking near the shore of the lake, a vast crowd

* Isaiah 9: 1, 2.

† The Sower, The Tares, The Mustard Seed, The Leaven, The Treasure, The Net, The Goodly Pearl, &c.

| Fishing. | How done. | Peter's adoration. |
|----------|-----------|--------------------|
|----------|-----------|--------------------|

pressed around him to hear the word of God. There being some fishers' boats drawn to land, he entered one which belonged to Peter, and floating out a short distance, he addressed the thronging multitudes. Having concluded his discourse, he desired Peter to put his vessel out to sea for a draught of fishes. This disciple, who, as we have seen, had already made Christ's acquaintance, replied that they had been toiling all the previous night, but had taken nothing. Travellers tell us that to this day the fishermen on these waters select the night to pursue their employment. With flaming torches they attract the fish around their boats, and then enclose them in the net, or transfix them with the spear.* These men thus had been unsuccessfully occupied ; but at Christ's desire Peter was willing to make another effort. The net was let down, and so great a quantity of fishes was taken, that by the united exertions of all, the astonishing burden was hardly conveyed to the shore.†

The effect of this preternatural success, which they could not but attribute to Christ's sovereign power over inferior orders of creation, was to excite within the disciples unmingled wonder and adoration. Peter especially was overwhelmed with this evidence of a present Divinity. Falling at the feet of Jesus, as a self-conscious criminal in God's sight, he exclaimed, " Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord ! " But Christ's object was not to terrify ; it was to confirm the faith of these spectators of his majesty. Some of them had before acknowledged his prophetic character, and been enrolled as his adherents, yet without wholly giving up their secular occupations. Christ now summoned these to a constant attendance on himself. James and John, also sons of Zebedee, became from this time

* Bush.

† Cf. Lynch's Expedition, p. 165, 8vo. ed.

The family enlarging.The Christian's vocation.

onward Christ's personal companions. Yielding without hesitation to the command, each of these selected associates left the implements of his craft; stayed not even at the strong drawings of a father's affection; but promptly accompanied the friendless Redeemer. Even so, declares the Saviour to all whom he still invites to a personal possession of his love, to a supreme consecration to his service — I say unto you, that he who loveth father or mother, son or daughter, wife, or lands, or houses, more than me, cannot be my disciple.

Nor let us forget for what purpose Christ calls us to himself. Here he directly informs us. Taking as usual his mode of speech from the immediate circumstances, he said to these individuals; "Follow me, and I will make you *fishers of men*." This was their high vocation. Not to repose in indolence, not to live for self, not to toil for earthly good; but to labor for human souls was their chief business — to fasten in *them* the spear of convincing truth; to enclose them in the net of the Gospel. So is this the work of all who are chosen in Christ and regenerated by his Spirit. He calls no one to an inferior agency. He sends not every one, 'tis true, to preach the Gospel from the pulpit; but he does commission and ordain every friend of his kingdom to lead men to heaven. And he who bears the name of Jesus, but has not seen and felt this sublime, this all-embracing, and ever-binding obligation, has not learned the alphabet even of his duty as a professed servant of the Lord.

In the synagogue at Capernaum, as in every place of his temporary or stated sojourn, Christ omitted no opportunity to declare the truths of his spiritual kingdom. Thus occupied in teaching, a man possessed with an evil spirit or demon was moved by an inward impulse to proclaim, in a violent manner and with open hostility, the deity of the Son of God in

The demoniac in Capernaum.

What were these?

the person of Jesus. With great fear he cried out ; “ What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” The near vicinity of that holy being seems to have always exasperated to unwonted rage the vile agents of the arch adversary, who at that period were permitted to afflict humanity. The contest between God and the devil was gathering fast to its most eventful crisis ; and the whole banded force of perdition would seem to have taken the field against Jehovah’s conquering son. Satan knew the character of his antagonist. Sometimes his open and frank avowal of acquaintance with the Redeemer would appear as if intended to excite a suspicion in men’s minds of some alliance or collusion between Jesus and infernal spirits, thus to neutralize the influence of his miraculous acts. But Christ was all mighty to curb the violence, all wise to defeat the stratagems of his foe. Commanding this demon into silence, by a word he dispossessed the miserable man of, the unclean spirit, filling with awe the spectators at the exhibition of Omnipotence leading captive the infuriate rebels of the pit.

It is worthy of notice that many of our Lord’s miracles consisted of a similar conquest over satanic power. Large numbers of that generation were subjects of a possession by demoniacal agents. In periods, either anterior or subsequent to Christ’s and the Apostles’ times, we have no satisfactory evidence of the existence of this precise infliction ; though in many ages things very unaccountable and very like, one might think, to these visitations from the regions beneath, have been observed. At the Christian era, this form of evil seems to have been suffered, to give to men a visible proof of the ability and purpose of God to defeat the malice and utmost strength of his adversary. It was a personal collision of the Holy and the wicked ones ; and now

Not diseases of the body only, but spiritual phenomena.

Christ was making reprisals for Eden's robbery, as the woman's seed ground in the dust beneath his foot the head of the serpent. It was a symbolic expression of the final victory of the kingdom of right and truth over that of error and wrong. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," said Christ, as these baffled demons cowered beneath his glance, his voice of majesty. We see him falling still into profounder depths of ruin, as the same glorious power deals one shattering blow after another upon his crippled cause, while the ages preparatory to final judgment are rolling on.

In these unparalleled cases of the Gospel record, we recognize not the presence of any form of a mere physical disease; a malignant distemper, which preyed on the bodies or the minds of its victims. The Jews most undeniably regarded them as direct assaults and temporary occupations of these sufferers by diabolical agents. Christ, in public and private, assented to this belief. To it, among the multitudes, and in the most confidential discourse with his disciples, he gave all the weight of his authority as a moral teacher. To say that he just yielded to a popular superstition, is to say of him what could not be justified in his addresses to the promiscuous crowds who came to him for instruction; but still less could we find a reason, or an apology for such endorsing of error, when alone with his own little circle he had no conceivable motive to conceal the simple facts here involved. There was, without doubt, a disordered state of the physical constitution in these individuals; but the demon was the cause of the disease, not the disease of the demon. It was a literal possession of a satanic power, by all the received and imperative laws of interpretation. To these spirits every attribute of personality was ascribed, as hearing, speaking, tearing the body; none of which could be affirmed of a mere attack of sickness, or nervous convulsion. Take this fre-

They possessed a true personality.

quent case, and apply it to epilepsy or any spasmodic affliction — “Jesus rebuked *him*,” i.e., the spirit, “saying, hold thy peace, and come out of *him*,” i.e., the man possessed. Both the demon and his victim are equally spoken of as persons. But who ever called a disease — *him*! “And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, *he* came out of him.” Mark still the full and unequivocal personality of this simple, unpoetical narration. So the amazed beholders exclaimed, “with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.” They possessed also the power of a conscious discernment of the nature of Christ’s antagonism to them, and supremacy over them, and of proclaiming this through the organs of the demonized. “Demoniacs knew,” says the Biblicist Jahn, “what madmen, insane persons, epileptics could not know, that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of David.” All the descriptions of their movements, by each of the inspired writers who deal with them, unite through a large variety of instances in giving them the unqualified marks of personal being. So much conformity and repetition of statement could never have been the license only of a fervid fancy. It is the embodying of a fact, the *possibility* of which no one can of course deny; but the philosophy of which, we are not called upon to develop, no more than in many other difficult matters, in order to its belief. The symbolic import of it has been declared. It was prophetic of the ultimate issues of the reign of grace in opposition to that of sin; which, by and bye, must like these reluctant agents of Satan return in despair to its own prison of woe.

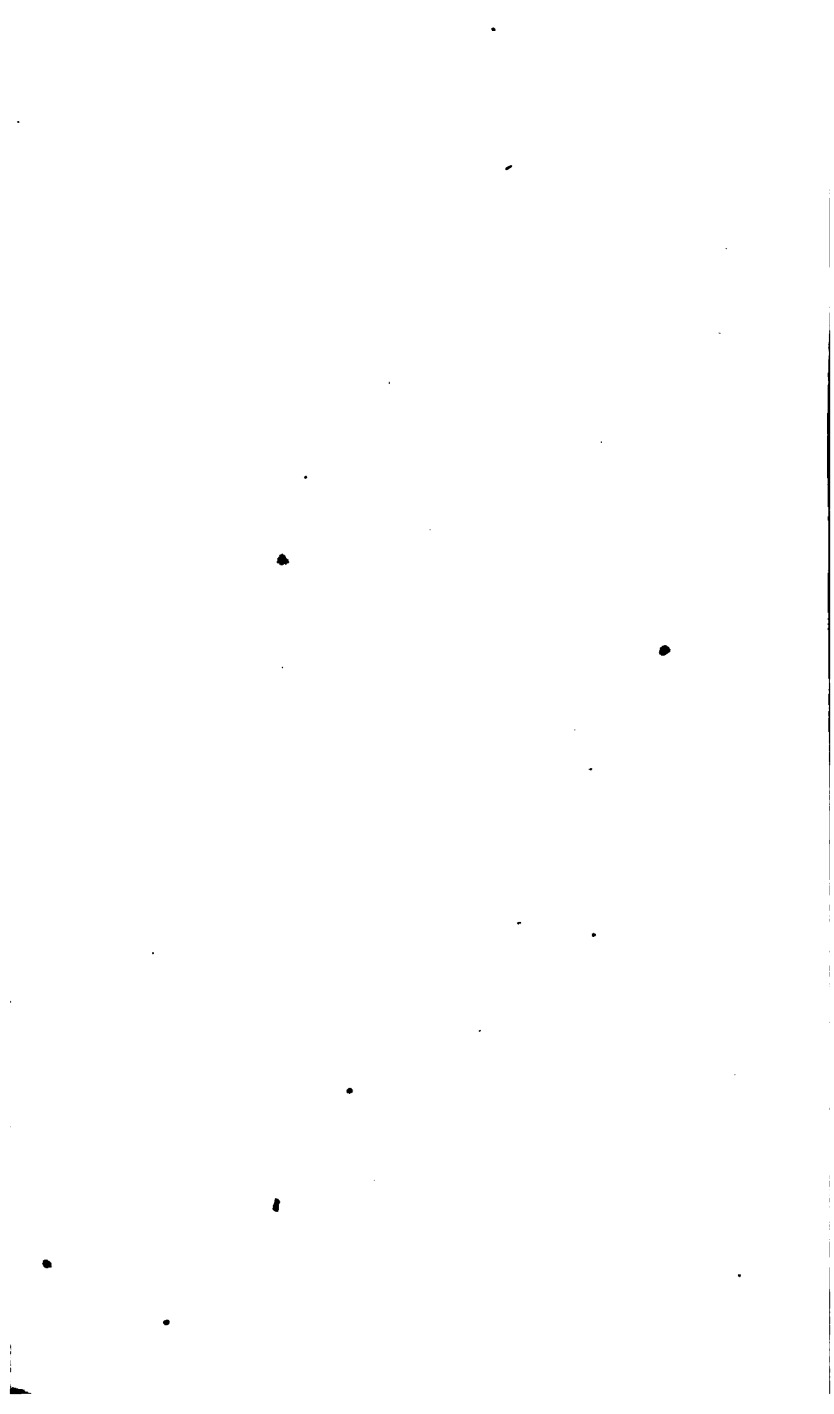
I have directed these observations against that style of criticism which, with more or less of a profession of regard for the Bible as inspired from God, is laboring so earnestly, both in this country and abroad, to eviscerate and emasculate it

False criticism.What may be.

by taking from it all its supernatural agency and vitality. Could this be done, the next thing we should expect even from these same operators, and we would join them most heartily in it, would be to deny with indignation, that a work so thoroughly "of the earth, earthy" had any claims to assert a divine origin. But this has not yet been done; nor will it probably soon be achieved. We meet the effort with one very modest, but very troublesome rejoinder: it *may be* that our explanation of this matter is correct; it *may be*, for all that can be adduced to the contrary. We think this, then, to be one of the cases in which it is decidedly safer to believe too much, if so it should be, than too little. To do the latter, may prove to have been a guilty infringement of the honors of Deity. It *may be* that our Saviour actually thus triumphed over Satan and his hosts. It *may be* that he designed thus to admonish his enemies of their hopeless destiny in such a conspiracy of ungodliness. It is prudent so to be warned. If Christ is able and resolved to spoil the empire of revolt, best for us will it be not to be found in its league. And we should not wait to come out of that union with iniquity, till the last crisis has arrived. Then it may be a too far gone enthralment. We cannot avoid this conflict, we cannot triumph therein. Christ will not let us do either. The devil indeed cried out in fearful agitation against the Son of God; "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee?" Impotent imprecation! Christ had something to do with that base spirit: sooner or later he will have something to do in stern retribution with all of Satan's accomplices. Those cries of distress availed nothing in that hour of the outcasting of this agent of his adversary; so when the same Lord of judgment draws nigh to punish human wickedness and cast it into perdition, it may be too late to talk of reconciliation, to sue for mercy. We may have nothing to do with Christ, as a

A lesson from these discomfitures.

friend or a servant ; but he has a work to perform on every defiant soul. He will do it, when the dead arise to stand before his awful throne. He will do it, when the soul leaves the body and returns to God who made it. He will perform it, even his strange work of recompense to all who have robbed him of their loyalty to make his foe their master. He will punish that alliance of guilt, will sentence Satan's servants to Satan's dark dungeons of misery forever and ever. Let his grace, then, dispossess us now of that spirit of unholiness and disobedience, lest this possession of our moral nature by God's adversary shall become an endless enslavement to fear, and guilt, and woe unutterable. ♦



CHAPTER VII.

HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFILED, SEPARATE FROM SINNERS.—PAUL.

THE report of the dispossession of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum rapidly and widely spread itself over the adjacent country. Vast numbers of people now came flocking to Christ to behold so wonderful a person, and to secure for themselves or their friends his healing power. In Peter's house in Capernaum, this disciple's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Christ stood by her couch and rebuked the disease, and at once it left her at his command, while she arose and ministered unto her guests. This, by the way, is a sufficient proof, that the "Chief of the Apostles," as Romanists call him—the rock of the church—did neither believe in or practice the doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy. As to their assumption that, on becoming a disciple of Christ Peter repudiated his wife, it is as foreign from the truth; for, at the time of this healing of *his wife's* mother, he had enrolled himself under Christ's rule; besides, a divorcement for no other cause than this would have been a direct breach of the law of marriage as expounded by Christ himself. Persons afflicted with the incurable and contagious leprosy of the East were cleansed. Paralytics were re-invigorated with strength and activity.

As Jesus was sitting one day among a company of the doctors and chief men of various parts of the land, who had come to hear and observe him, one of these victims of the palsy was brought on a bed for his compassionate aid. So great was the pressure of those within and around the house,

The sick of palsy.

Through the roof.

An unspoken prayer.

that they took the invalid up the usual outside stairway * upon the flat roof, and making an opening through the thatching or other covering, (the word *tiling* in our translation has to us a too difficult association of ideas for the facts of this case,) they let the couch and its occupant down into the room where Jesus was teaching. It was frequent to make the largest apartment of a Jewish house on the upper floor, occupying nearly all the area of the building, for assemblies. † Very likely this concourse of Christ's hearers was thus situated. The account, then, easily harmonises with a natural probability; whereas, if we think only of a three or four storied modern edifice, with a sharp, slated roof, there seems to be no small ground for the shallow sneer with which Mr. Thomas Paine, and similar profound Biblical interpreters have discarded this impressive incident.

Christ met this remarkable exhibition of earnest, confiding desire, in as remarkable a manner. To the utter astonishment of his learned visitors from abroad, he said to the sick man; "Thy sins are forgiven." He would not have pronounced this absolution, had he not seen the heart of a penitent, contrite sinner in that afflicted one. There was here no uttered prayer for pardon; but there must have been an inward longing for spiritual health as well as for physical relief. Christ had his own ends to answer in this unusual procedure. It was a bold proclamation of his divinity to these men of rank in Israel. So they construed it, and began to reason silently; "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Their last questioning was most undeniable; this is a prerogative only of supreme jurisdiction. And their charge of blasphemy against Christ had been as unrefutable, had he been no more

* Trench on the Miracles, p. 164.

† Id. 165.

Sound reasoning.Deeds of compassion.

than what he appeared to be. This accusation of himself "in their hearts" he also perceived, as readily as he had those emotions of repentance in the sick man's bosom. How little did the Saviour need to be told of what was going on in the minds around him. Nor did his treatment of this scepticism do aught to lessen the amazement which his words had produced. Replying to their unspoken thoughts, he said to the lookers-on, "Whether is it easier" — which demands the most supernatural power — "to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk?" You think me blasphemous, because in pronouncing the former I have trenched on the peculiar acts of God. Now will I show you my authority to do even this; that I the Son of Man have power upon earth to forgive sins, by my own proper and inherent participation in the divine nature. Let this palsied man, whom I have pardoned, rise up, and in the renovated vigor of health, bear away his couch to his own home! If this command has virtue in it to accomplish that miracle, then has he who speaks it the full, unchallengeable right, as God, to absolve the penitent. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, we have seen strange things to-day.

Thus were diseases his servants whose words were almighty. Passing once more through Galilee, he preached to multitudes the good news of his kingdom, while in every village and section of the land deeds of benevolence sent joy through the abodes of previous pain and sorrow. "And devils also came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God." Even in his retirements into the desert for solitude and converse with his disciples, the eager crowds still "sought him, and came unto him, and

Call of Matthew.

Second Passover.

House of mercy.

stayed him, that he should not depart from them." Would that they had been as anxious to learn his heavenly wisdom, to secure his converting grace, as they were to gain temporal blessings from his hands.

Near to Capernaum, by the side of the lake of Tiberias, Christ found another of his future disciples in the person of Matthew or Levi, a receiver of taxes or customs; who seems, however, as in the case of the earlier called of his brethren, not at once to have fully relinquished his former occupation for an attendance on the Saviour.* And now, the approach of the Passover again turned our Lord's footsteps towards Jerusalem from the north. This was his second journey to that city. It was in the season of spring. Constantly intent on searching out occasions of usefulness, we find him repairing soon to a scene of calamity and suffering. Near the sheep-market, a pool or bath called Bethesda—the house of mercy—was the resort of a large concourse of the sick and decrepit, for certain restorative properties which it was believed to possess. Dr. Robinson is of opinion that this pool was situated in the south-eastern suburbs of Jerusalem, probably answering to what now is known as the Upper Fountain of Siloam. He visited this spot in the month of April, not far from the period of the year at which this incident occurred; and very fortunately was a witness of one of those commotions in these waters, of which ancient writers make frequent mention, and which, it may be, was this identical troubling of the fountain, spoken of in our narrative as effected by angelic agency. Suddenly, while preparing to measure the spot, the water began to rise

* Thus Tholuck, *Exposition of Sermon on the Mount*, vol. 1, p. 38, Edinburgh edition, reconciles very naturally the apparent discrepancies in the Gospels, concerning this disciple's vocation.

Troubling of the waters.Lame man healed.

upon him and his fellow traveller, and in less than five minutes, the basin was filled to the additional depth of a foot, the water making a gurgling sound through the interior passages. In ten minutes more, it had again subsided to its original quantity.* During some such agitation as this, it would seem that the sick were accustomed to be placed in this bath, for which they awaited an opportunity in the adjoining porches. Much has been disputed concerning the reality of these miraculous cures attributed to this fountain; and there is a question also as to the genuineness of the text which describes this angelic visitation and its result, into which topics it would delay us too much to enter. Respecting the act which Christ here performed, there is no opening for controversy. He found a man who, for thirty-eight years, had been suffering from some severe infirmity which rendered him helpless. For a long time he had been waiting at Bethesda to make trial of its healing powers; but no one had aided him, and he had never been able at the critical juncture to go down into the fountain. In compassion of his friendless condition, Jesus said unto him, "Rise, take up thy couch and walk;" and instantly, his limbs were braced with restored strength, and he walked forth unimpeded before the surrounding spectators.

It was the Sabbath. The Jews, beholding the recovered man carrying his bed from the place of his long confinement, rebuked his impiety, as though this act were a breach of the sanctity of the day. The man appealed in justification to the command of him who had made him whole. Glad of the slenderest pretext to persecute Christ, these hypocritical guardians of God's laws, albeit most godless themselves at heart, sought out Jesus with intent to slay him. Their enmity

* Researches in Palestine, I. pp. 506-8.

The Sabbath.False zeal for its sanctity.

burned with furnace-heat against him, whose title to the Messiahship each act of divine authority more conspicuously ratified, but whom they had resolved to reject. Their hearts were steeled to evidence, were steeped in malignity. And most odious of all, this festering mass of implacable hate was covered up in a cloak of religious zeal. But it was only a cloak. Little cared these men for the true sanctification of God's Sabbaths; they did not comprehend most distantly even the vital nature and grand purpose of that institution. Singular fatuity this, which did not perceive that the rights of the divine government, of which they would show such jealous watchfulness, were suffering an immeasurably greater violence from their own murderous passions than from the alleged offence of Christ. But this old self-delusion is yet as strong as ever. And for the glory of God, piety is often doomed to be crucified still between two thieves.

Our Lord, so far from conceding aught of guiltiness in what had been done by himself and this subject of his mercy, hesitated not to defend it on the ground of his personal authority over the Sabbath. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." As God the Father contracts no sin in administering divine government uninterruptedly by the exertion of Almighty energy, so God the Son was likewise blameless in carrying forward his designs of love unceasingly — each department of these labors being moved by the same impulses towards the same ends. The Jews understood this reply as setting up a pretension to full equality with God. What in later times appears to have been either very slowly or not at all discoverable in these words of Jesus, his immediate auditors seized at a glance; and this so fully, that they "again sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath but had made himself equal with God." Nor did Christ say aught, in the discourse which follows, to

Christ's lordship over it.The ears of corn.

lessen that conviction of his asserted Deity, in his adversaries' minds. He guards, indeed, inviolably his Father's honors from invasion ; but by his own office as Judge of men ; by the life which is in him as life is in the Father ; by his works of divine power ; by his Father's witness and testimony to his divinity ; by their own Scriptures if rightly searched ; by all these, Christ re-alleged his position as nothing less than that which these Jews drew from his language ; and for which constructive blasphemy they renewed their plots against his life.

Still bent upon involving Jesus in some criminal deed, no act of himself or his followers escaped the malicious scrutiny of his foes. As his little company, on another Sabbath, was passing a field of corn, being hungry they plucked the grain to eat. If they had *stolen* it, as infidels sometimes have coarsely charged, this the Pharisees would doubtless have known and put into their indictment. *They* seem not however to have thought of this modern accusation ; but they did fasten on this innocent occurrence to drive again their charge of breaking the Sabbath. Christ once more exposed their error. From their own Scriptures he cited parallel and justifying cases. He brought out another principle of obedience to God, of which they had apparently no knowledge. As his cure of the man at Bethesda on this day was in strict accordance with the sabbatic law, for it was an act of mercy ; so was this second deed, for it was an act of necessity. Neither was sinful. His accusers would never had imagined them wrong, if "they had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Had they possessed an insight into this truth, they "would not have condemned the guiltless."

Is this truth yet sufficiently understood among Christians ? While we insist most uncompromisingly upon the protection of

 "Mercy" not "sacrifice."

Leighton.

False logic.

God's day from all needless secularizing, either in labor or travel, guarding it from violation as the great bulwark of a pure worship, is it not verging quite into the mistake of these Jews, though not at all with their peculiar motives it may be, to condemn, as sinful, acts which are known by all to be undertaken for purposes exclusively of a religious nature? The "mercy" which God will have rather than "sacrifice" is the obedience of Christian service, the offerings of love and duty to his cause, which are of far more worth than any degree of ceremonial exactitude; which moreover constitute the very business of this holy day. The Sabbath belongs to religion. Thus Leighton, in his Exposition of the Fourth Commandment, says: "Only the peculiar of this day is, that we may not divide it betwixt heaven and earth, that it shall be wholly for the service of God, and no work at all to have place in it that may hinder that, and suits not with the sanctifying of it; for so we are to understand the word, *no manner of work*."* Acts performed, therefore, *for wholly religious ends* do not violate its sacredness. No one has any ground to use such acts as an excuse for his secular pursuits on this day. He must know that an inference like this is altogether unwarrantable. Because, for example, a clergyman rides to an adjoining parish, for the only and universally understood object of conducting God's public worship, for which the Sabbath was ordained, what sort of a plea is this to justify another in taking a ride for pleasure, or in spending the day in worldly occupations of any kind? Quite as well might a man argue a right to go into his mowing field to gather his yearly crop, on this day, because the disciples gathered a few ears of corn on the Sabbath to allay their hunger.

 * Works, Edin. ed. p. 485.

Discriminations and distinctions.

Having fallen on this topic very naturally from the incidents under review, let me pause here a moment longer. However good a cause in itself may be, it can gain no real advance through unsound arguments or exaggerated assumptions. And the better it is inherently, the less need has it of such supports. The claims of Sabbath-sanctification are indisputably of God's sanction. They demand a vigilant care. But this must be discriminating. To go for things in the mass, oblivious of all exceptional cases, I know is an easier labor than to divide and separate, among apparent resemblances, the true from the false, the wrong from the right, according to the real nature of the act. It ministers also sometimes to a morbid conscientiousness, and sometimes to a zeal of external exactness, which however may be very lax on *other* points of morality, thus to single out some subject of duty, and by a sweeping construction to rule down rigidly all cases under it to the same level of restriction. In the Temperance reform, for example, some can see no place to stop until they have proscribed the wine of Christ's holy sacrament. And others will have it that the third commandment prohibits a judicial or official oath. All this is straining a good bow till it breaks. If sincerely benevolent, this state of mind indicates a distrust of truth's success upon its own merits. No one should doubt that success by divine help. That which is right will triumph. And no one should fear to state any requirement of moral and religious duty in terms which are a fair construction of the teaching of Christ and his Apostles in the matter. Adhering to this principle, we shall avoid on the one hand the sin of a lax interpretation of God's commands, and on the other, the fault of an unreasonable and uncharitable condemning of the guiltless.

But Christ has not yet done with this subject. Again was the snare which he had so wisely escaped laid for him by

More Sabbath work.Not necessary but right.

his indefatigable adversaries. A man with a withered hand was with him on the Sabbath in the synagogue. The Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on that day this sufferer. To draw him out, they put to Jesus the question ; "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" Christ replied by another inquiry, which carries us to the elements of this whole business ; "I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil?" Was this institution ordained to bless mankind? Then let it shed its blessings freely, as is the love of God its institutor, to the bodies and souls of the needy. "Is it lawful to do good or to do evil?" Observe, that not to do the *former* is to do the *latter*. In other words, the Sabbath is kept in its most sacred intentions when devoted to the doing of good to our fellow creatures, and, which is the same thing, to the prevention of evil. But what this *good* and *evil* shall be, must be estimated in a religious spirit, and according to the principles of God's word. Now follows a remarkable scene. With this most skilful and righteous parrying of their stratagem, Christ might have contented himself, and escaped further immediate annoyance. The invalid man might have carried his withered hand uncured to another day. There was no mortal danger in it, perhaps no pain at all. But Christ saw fit to do *at this time* what was *not* positively necessary, but was intrinsically right. He saw fit not to be trammelled in his service of God and humanity by the unspiritual views of his questioners. "Harmless" as he was in avoiding occasions for the reproaches of men who loved him not, at times he felt it expedient to make a bold stand against their wrongful prejudices, to assert the privileges of a Christian freedom, for the good of others. Looking round about on his silenced opponents "with anger," — with indignation, not passionate but profound, "being grieved for the hardness of their heart, he

Godlike transparency.Causeless hatred.

saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand ! And he stretched it out ; and his hand was restored whole as the other."

How godlike this action, how divine its spirit. It was not resentment which moved his breast, which thrilled his accents. It was the serene, the majestic presence of moral integrity and benevolence, turning not aside from truth and mercy, for human opposition, or from human fear ; silencing all cavils by the manifestation of a character as purely excellent as the power which accompanied it was infinite. Alas ! that those who saw its glory should have withstood so desperately its softening, subduing influence ; that we should read of no other effect upon their souls from scenes like these, than this, that "they were filled with madness, and communed one with another, — and held a council against him, how they might destroy him."

Again the question returns upon us, why this persecuting rage ? What had this upright, this compassionate, this most transparent of men done now to stir up this glowing revenge ? They had seen him only occupied in deeds of goodness. They had received no reproachful rebuff, no harmful conduct from him, who, midst all these turmoils and besetments of subtle and boisterous wickedness, was still the same blameless one, "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Why then was the world too small to contain him and these his murderous maligners ? Why is he still hated on earth by selfish, ungodly hearts ? Why does the deathless rancor of the pit yet burn against Infinite excellence ? Why does the Foe of the God of heaven

———"made fiercer by despair,
Still struggle with the Eternal to be deemed
Equal in strength."

Ah ! the teeming testimony which every generation of the

Stretch forth thy hand.

history of earth and of hell has given to the terrible inveteracy, the self-propagating life of the natural depravity of the apostate soul.

Does any one ask, how shall this state of guilt be abandoned? I reply, this indifferent, unbelieving neglect of Christ must give place to an earnest attention to his office, his claims, his commands, as man's only Saviour. Our spiritual nature is held under the withering paralysis of sin. Yes; but say not, "I have no exertion to make to be rid of this helplessness." To you, Christ says, as to the man in the synagogue, "Stretch forth thy hand!" You have something to do to be healed. You may say, "My hand is withered; it hangs powerless at my side; I cannot stretch it forth." But Christ will not change his demand for all that. He would not have made it, were it not right. "Stretch forth thy withered hand, wouldst thou be cured." Do it, sinner; put your whole energy of desire, and will, and determination, fully, heartily, into one struggling effort to make Christ's salvation your own; and by Christ's grace, what he requires of you, you will find accomplished in the blessed deliverance of your soul from the impotence, the guilt, the miserable dissatisfaction of ungodliness.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES FOR THEY SEE, AND YOUR EARS FOR THEY HEAR. FOR VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MANY PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS MEN HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THOSE THINGS WHICH YE SEE, AND HAVE NOT SEEN THEM; AND TO HEAR THOSE THINGS WHICH YE HEAR, AND HAVE NOT HEARD THEM. — MATTHEW.

THESE days of Christ's sojourn in the flesh were those to which holy and inspired teachers and rulers of the Hebrew nation had looked forward out of the comparative obscurity of former ages, with intense desire to penetrate more clearly into the nature of their expected glories. The kingdom of God, as established through the personal labors of his Son on earth, had been foreshadowed to their faith, but not realized to their sight. It was a bright and cheering hope which illumined the future to their spiritual vision, as when king David, beyond the splendid picture which he sketched of Solomon's happier reign than his own, caught a glimpse of still more prosperous and magnificent fortunes than even these, under the peaceful sway of a greater than Solomon. In this belief they lived and died, not having received the promises, but persuaded of them. Now, that which they longed to see and hear was becoming actual to the senses of men. To have received these intimations of so favored an era approaching, was indeed a distinguished honor. But how much superior the blessedness to behold its dawning light, its advancing day of heavenly manifestations. Christ, self-conscious of his exalted position as the accomplishment of all these anticipations of a past history, omniscient of the coming

Anticipations realizing.An evening scene.

triumphs of truth and righteousness through his agency, comprehended most distinctly the grandeur of the period thus marked by his advent. Now, the least of his disciples was greater than the most illustrious of a less enlightened day. "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."

From the plottings of the Pharisees and the Herodians against his life in Jerusalem, Christ had once more withdrawn to his favorite haunts along the shores of the Galilean sea.* Immense crowds were gathering after him again, from Galilee, Judea, Idumea, Tyre and Sidon. His sympathies and active benevolence were as ever promptly enlisted in relieving their distresses; and after these labors, he betook himself to a place of solitary retirement. The incident is related in beautifully simple and impressive words; "It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

We can easily picture this interesting spectacle. The shadows of evening are fallen, and while the wide-spread encampment of his visitors is resounding with busy preparations for the night's refreshment and repose, an unattended man is seeking the recesses of a neighboring eminence for meditation and devotion. Those busy sounds from the plain beneath at length are hushed into the slumbers of the wearied and the sick; the slow watches of the lesser hours are already drawing onward towards the breaking of another day of excitement and of toil; but no sleep has visited the eyelids of the lonely one, who bows his head on the cold earth of yonder hill. What does he there through this so strangely protracted vigil? Listen, and that low but fervent utterance of supplication and perhaps of joyous praise, will tell us. He is in

* Mark 8: 6-8.

The mountain vigil.Preparation for the morrow.

communion with the world that is unseen and holy. Heaven's sympathies and fellowships have come down to make that mountain's solitude to his soul like the bright temple where God is worshipped by the angelic hosts. He is there away from other companionship, because such intercourse with his Father was dearer to his affections than all social delights. He was on the point, moreover, of publicly setting apart and ordaining his apostles to their high commission in the establishment of his kingdom among men. The morrow was to be a memorable day in the annals of the Church. The preparation of even a spirit so pure as Christ's, for an important religious occasion, was best to be made in secret, earnest, near approaches to the throne of God. How luminous a copy for the imitation of his imperfect, erring disciples, that they should diligently seek counsel from above in every act of life. And how can he make pretension to the love of Christ, who is conscious of no outgoing of desire towards God in this same communion of feeling and worship; who, in the closet of personal, confidential intercourse with Deity, looks not for heavenly guidance in the formation of his plans or in their execution? How can he be said to possess the spirit of piety, who knows nothing of that intense emotion, that sanctified passion of the heart, which pants after God as the chased and thirsting roe pants for the water-brooks?

He who belongs to God, will love to commune with God. In these chosen and unobserved pleasures he will find rest and strength and hope; light, peace, and victory over sin. No Christian is firm enough in his steadfastness, is sure enough of his salvation, to dispense with their aid. Remember this midnight mountain scene.

Devotion.

God's method of publishing truth.

"If thus our Lord himself withdrew,
Stealing at times away,
E'en from the loved, the chosen few,
In solitude to pray;
How should his followers, frail and weak,
Such seasons of retirement seek."

"For oh! those transient gleams of heaven,
To calmer, purer spirits given,
Children of hallowed peace, are known
In solitude and shade alone."

At the close of this long but delightful vigil, Christ gathered about him those most advanced in a knowledge of his character and designs, and selected twelve of their number as his special messengers or apostles. Afterwards to unite in their persons the extraordinary and temporary office of testifying to the resurrection of their Master from the dead, they were now appointed by him to go forth and preach the Gospel of salvation to sinners, and also in his name to work miracles in attestation of their right to be believed as teachers of religion. This was their permanent calling; and in this business of publishing the truths of Christianity the original twelve were the predecessors of all whom God by his grace and Spirit still consecrates to the same employment. This, of all others, was heaven's selected method to renew the sinful. We may be certain, then, that it answers to some deep, and permanent necessity of fallen human nature; that no superior wit or wisdom of man will ever discover a better substitute. This glorious line of messengers from God was essentially in being and in action under the Old Testament economy; for all the saving truth then taught was Christian truth, and Abraham preached it, and so did Noah and Abel; for salvation then, as ever since, has only been in the hands of "One Mediator." But from Christ in person this com-

The Apostles' commission.Their successors in all ages.

mission received a fresh authentication and impulse, in this humble band of unknown Galileans. It has a renewal wherever Christ's faithful ambassadors yet contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The world, undervaluing these claims, may not accredit the credentials of those who urge it, in Christ's name, to be reconciled to God. To its sensuous discernment, "it may seem a poor, despicable business, that a frail, sinful man speaks a few words in their hearing ; yet, look upon this as the way wherein God communicates happiness to them that believe, and works that believing, alters the whole frame-work of the soul, and makes a new creature, as it begets it again to an inheritance of glory ; consider it thus, which is its true character, and then what can be so precious ! Let the world disesteem the preaching of the Gospel as they will ; but know ye that it is " the power of God to salvation." * Jehovah recognizes his heralds of redemption as bearing a part, 'as filling a sphere in the enterprise of saving grace, not inferior in value to the work of angels. Is it a most responsible thing to fill the station of a minister of Jesus Christ, a pastor in his churches ? It is. But hardly less so, to fill their place, to whom for life or death, the word of this salvation is thus sent.

The selection of the apostles was made at an early hour of the morning. Descending with them the mountain, our Lord occupied some time in healing the many sick who had resorted to him ; but, as the crowds now pressed upon him, he again retreated to an elevated level on the hill-side, and in the presence of his just-appointed messengers, and of the thronging thousands, he delivered the discourse usually called " the Sermon on the Mount." I have already referred to the beautiful and striking features of the scenery in the midst

* Leighton on I. Peter.

Josephus and Tholuck on the scenery near Capernaum.

of which Christ pronounced this impressive address. Let us renew that reference for a moment, that we may more intelligently enter into the circumstances and spirit of the occasion.

The time chosen for this purpose by our Lord could not have been much later than the rising of the sun. It was the bright and exhilarating spring-season of the year. Before the eye of this assembled multitude, the blue waters of the lake of Galilee lay circled within its skirting highlands, a sparkling gem in a dark, rich setting of rock and forest. Travellers are wont to liken these environs to the finest similar localities of their native lands, as the mountain sections of Scotland, the shores of the lake of Geneva. Josephus, even, in speaking of Galilee, rises into a poetic mood. Marvellous, he says, for natural beauty is the country around the sea of Gennesaret. Such is the fertility of the soil, that it produces spontaneously all shrubs. But, besides this, the husbandmen have planted the most various sorts, for there is none which the temperature of the climate does not suit; the nut tree, the palm, the fig, the olive flourish side by side. The seasons also carry on a beautiful rivalry, each struggling with the other for the possession of the land. But, charming above all must be the beauty of the region, where it presents itself in one view, precisely at the spot on which our Lord delivered his discourse; far off, the rich and blooming landscape of Galilee; to the north, the snow-crowned Hermon; to the west, the woody Carmel; at the distance of a stone-cast, the cheerful sea of Tiberias; add to this picture, the cloudless sky of southern regions, and the solemn silence of early morn. The whole scene is of a character familiar and grave, attractive and dignified. No synagogue, not even the temple of the metropolis itself, could make so deep and solemn an impression. There were to be seen here none of the formalities which would have accompanied the ordinary

lecture of a Jewish teacher. He sat down upon the rising ground, and, fixing his eyes on the disciples, who stood next to him, began, Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

In this extended address, the object of Christ seems to have been twofold ; to instruct the future preachers of his Gospel, now before him, more fully into the nature of that work ; and to show to that vast company of sinners, whether ignorant or learned, the essential principles of a saving piety. In other words, it is a discourse of the kingdom of heaven from the standpoint of a regenerate character ; the analysis of which may be thus briefly given. Its commencing paragraph describes the character and the blessedness of the true subjects of that kingdom. Next we have a statement of the relation of the Gospel to the earlier law, and an exposition of that law according to the spirit of Christian love and equity ; in which it is to be observed, that Christ makes no antagonism between the two, but only condemns the false interpretations by the Jews of their own code of morals, and gives to this a fuller development in its rightful supremacy over the entire nature and life of man. Then our Lord brings out to view the great motive of a vital religion — a supreme regard to God — in contrast with the hollow service of the Pharisees, in their alms-giving, fasting and prayer ; in which he places these upon their proper basis, as acts of piety, and recites that admirable compendium of the leading topics of Christian supplication, known by us as “The Lord’s Prayer.” Next follows a solemn caution against the attempt to serve both God and the world with the same heart. And in conclusion, we have a variety of counsels to a careful performance of personal and social duties ; an earnest exhortation to be firm and determined in the business of sal-

* V. Tholuck, Expo. Sermon on the Mt. condensed, I. pp. 73-5.

Identity of Matthew's and Luke's reports.

Spirit of this sermon.

vation, to avoid all hypocrisy, and to practise faithfully the duties which we owe to God and man.*

Our Saviour here traversed a wide field of truth; and though it is generally of an ethical and practical kind, yet everywhere it lays hold of this great first principle of godliness and virtue, that it is only a heart in unison with God which can bring forth these fruits of piety; that the *external* is of small comparative consequence without the *internal* and *vital*. This whole discourse breathes fragrantly the atmosphere of a heavenly holiness. It is at the farthest possible remove from the calculating, cold proprieties of a mere superficial rectitude. Its pleasant waters gush all the way from the innermost fountains of life and sympathy. It is a chart on which God himself has mapped down the bearings and distances. With its disclosures, no man need remain in ignorance of his real position. Here we are summoned to a culture of spiritual graces, all comprehended in one command, "Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" let your religious character be essentially like God's; and aim at the entire supremacy of this

* V. Tholuck, as above, I. pp. 32-3, for a generally similar view.

The question is yet undetermined, though the authorities preponderate affirmatively, whether the fragmentary address in Luke 6: 17-49, be of the same utterance in time, as the longer discourse in Matthew. The Greek Church has regarded them generally as one; the Latin Church after Augustine, more commonly as two; but Calvin dissents from this. The reasons *against* their identity are, their great difference in point of expansion; the addition by Luke of the "woe" to the blessing; and some other minor discrepancies of position and attitude in the speaker. On the other hand, the discourses in both Evangelists have the same beginning and conclusion; both also are followed immediately by the same historical event—Christ's healing of the centurion's servant in Capernaum. Cf. Tholuck's Exposition, as above, I. pp. 1-7. This commentator gives his judgment strongly in favor of the *oneness* of these addresses.

Another miracle.Unhesitating faith.

character within you. This is our pattern. Have we in earnest commenced to copy it? He, who spake these weighty words, has deliberately declared in their concluding clause: He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, is like a man that without a foundation, built a house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat violently and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.

If as yet we are disobedient to these counsels, if the messages of Christ's servants fail to secure our regard, let us listen at least when God's Son himself condescends to become the preacher; and to *this* especially, that our foundation of hope, as spiritual beings is, by the judgment of Jehovah, only a wreath of sand, which the first wave of his indignation may sweep to perdition, with all that we may have built upon it. The man who hears and obeys Christ's teachings, and he alone, is building on the eternal Rock.

Not long after the ending of this discourse, Christ healed in Capernaum the sick servant of an officer of the Roman garrison of that city. A Gentile by birth, this centurion seems to have been proselyted to Judaism, as he had erected a synagogue for that worship. The remarkable feature of this incident was, the unhesitating faith of the man in Christ's entire control of diseases, even as himself was accustomed to have his military orders promptly and implicitly obeyed. This faith, coupled with his profound sense of personal undeservingness, arrested Christ's notice as the evidence of a sincerely religious disposition of heart. The petition of help to his suffering servant was granted, while the spirit manifested by this offspring of a heathen race was set, by the Saviour, in bold and most commendatory contrast with that of Israel's rejection of his divine mission.

And now we accompany our Lord on another of those

Visit to Nain.

A funeral procession.

Death vanquished.

quiet and unpretending visits of mercy, the memory of which breathes over our hearts like a soft air from the fields of paradise. It is the day after the just-narrated miracle in Capernaum; and with his disciples Jesus is approaching the village of Nain, some twenty-five miles from that city. As he drew nigh the gate of Nain, the purpose of this journey became apparent. A funeral procession was advancing with measured step. It was a dead man passing to the place of burial—the only son of his mother, and she a widow. And as the mourning company took its sorrowful way, much people followed to mingle their sympathy with her bitter grief, from whom death had taken her last staff of reliance. Christ paused to look upon this scene of anguish, and as they met, sweetly and strangely did the voice of the wayfarer fall on her ear, “weep not!” Yet who should weep, if not a widowed mother over the cold clay of the son of her hopes? But in the countenance of Jesus there was a radiant compassion and a glance of majesty, which seemed to say that soon the fountain of that gushing sorrow should be dried. Little might that smitten one imagine how gloriously this tremulous thought was instantly to be realized; how, from behind this dark, o’er-circling cloud, the noon-day sun was just ready to burst in kingly splendor. But he had touched the bier, who was able from the chill precincts of mortality to reclaim its victim. The bearers of the dead stood still. And Jesus said; Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! I, the Lord of Life, call thee back to life, to thy mother’s arms.

“ And instantly the breast

Heaved in its cerements, and a sudden flush

Ran through the lines of the divided lips,

And with a murmur of his mother’s name,

He trembled and sat upright;

And while the mourner hung upon his neck,

Jesus went calmly on his way to Nain.”

A joyful surprise.

Sympathy.

"Weep not."

The emotions of that hour of unexpected and wondering joy, when, not to the silent sepulchre, but again to her thrice happy home, this delighted mother conducted her beloved son; the feelings of gratitude and amazement and ecstatic gladness which flowed through those bosoms, erasing all traces of recent grief, thought cannot picture, much less can words describe. The incident is a most engaging example of Divine compassion, ministering to human distress a soothing balm; meeting the woes of mortal existence with an antidote of superabounding relief. Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses; took them, bore them *away*. Thus, too, does he relieve our souls of death and anguish. While we adore the Omnipotence which could revive, could recreate life within a body which was utterly inanimate, fit only to be consigned to corruption; while here we behold an energy displayed in Christ's own person, not second to that which spake earth into primal being, not second to that which shall ere long summons, with equal ease, the millions of the tombs to judgment; while we recognize here and reverence the full outshining of Deity, we also gaze with admiration on the exhibition of the deep, the honest sympathy of Jesus for human suffering. And was it for this woman alone? No; she was a stranger. But no longer is she a stranger to the heart of human and of Christian love. Her story has gone abroad through the whole world, and everywhere it has told the victims of sorrow that there is One who tenderly regards their distresses. Still is this scene of alleviated grief and bereavement calling the afflicted to bring their trials, and repose them on the bosom of him who yet is stilling the tempests of inward trouble with the same kind words, "weep not!" Christ feels no differently now than when, at the gate of Nain, he gave back to this heart-stricken widow, her son raised from the dead.

Crushed hearts may hope.

"The pity of our Lord
To those who fear his name,
Is such as tender parents feel —
He knows their feeble frame."

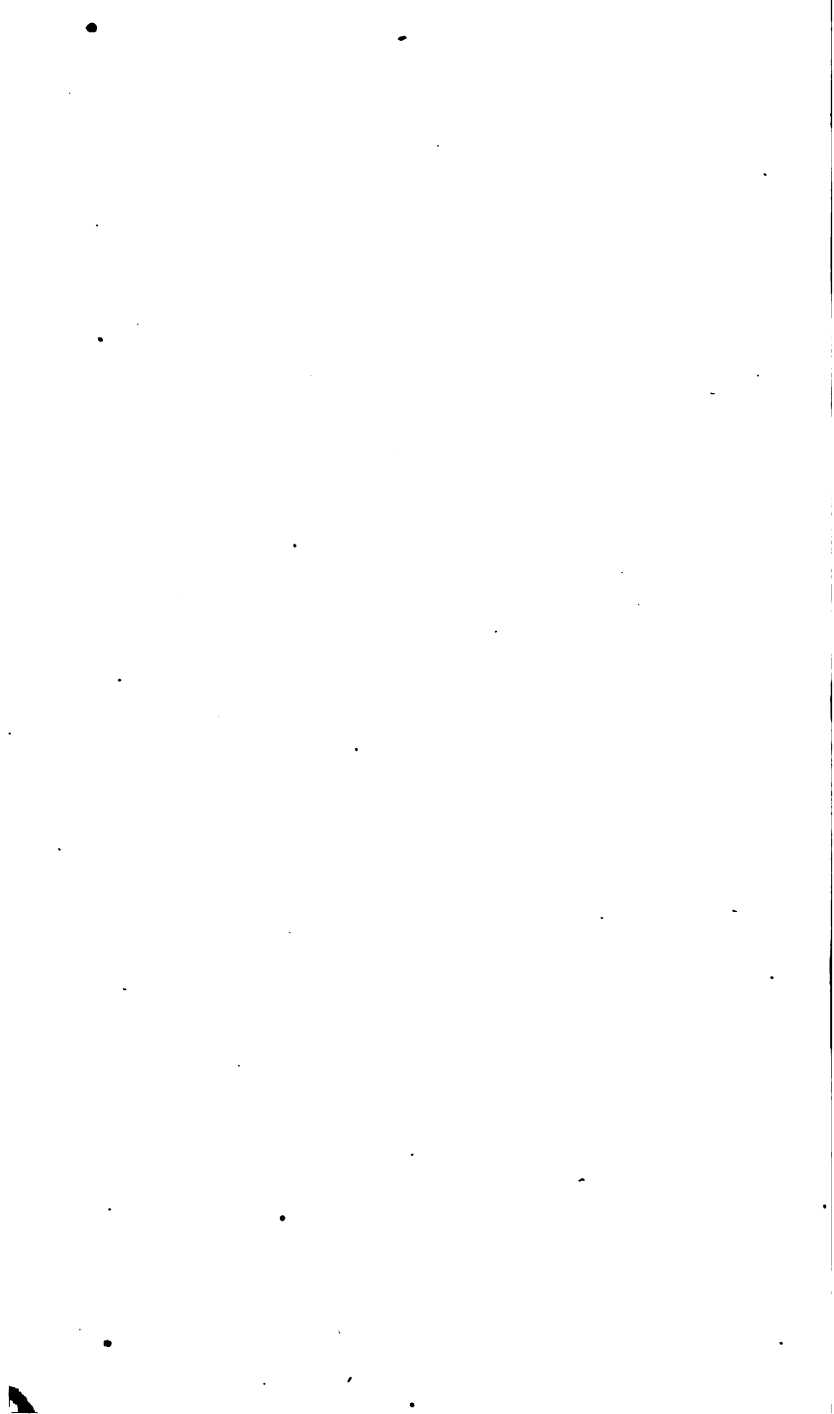
He may not remove, indeed, the causes of present grief by restoring departed objects of our attachment ; but those who trust in his wisdom shall find him a God of eternal faithfulness, and their losses shall prove to be their gain. He knows the trials of the flesh as perfectly as when he shared them on earth. He has forgotten nothing of that checkered history. What consolation, in the night of mortal affliction, to have in God a sympathising friend ! How reviving to the courage of his people, making their way through much tribulation to the kingdom of heaven, to hear from the omnipresent spirit of Christ that voice of protection and comfort, sounding calmly over all this tumult of the world's troubles ; *weep not* — here, at my mercy seat, there is refuge for the wanderer, joy for the disconsolate :

"Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish,
Earth hath no sorrow which heaven cannot cure."

Well is it that the grace of Christ is strong to bear up the sinking spirit, for man is born to disappointment as the sparks fly upward. And some forms of evil there are, that are heavier than death, more bitter than the grave. We mourn over our losses, and many of them are severe, even when we are permitted to minister around the dying couch of beloved ones with all the alleviations of suffering which love can devise ; where too the hopes of a heavenly reunion rob these separations of their sharpest sting. But such afflictions are mercies compared with the woes which are crushing out of thousands of throbbing bosoms the last pulse

Sorrows heavier than the grave.

of joy, in broad sections of this civilized and Christian earth, where, in dark places of cruelty, God's angels "behold the tears of those that are oppressed, and they have no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there is power, but *they* have no comforter." Alas! that out of the accursed selfishness and cruelty of irresponsible power, man should be capable of inflicting such wretchedness upon his fellow man, as to make us "praise the dead that are already dead, more than the living that are yet alive." Who but the Omnipresent knoweth, heareth, the sighings of these distressed, as they groan in many a house of bondage? But *I*, saith Jehovah, know their sorrows. And even in these depths of tribulation Christ's blessed "weep not" has changed the crushed captive into the calm hero, the victorious martyr for the right. He who met the childless widow at the gate of Nain, has sought out and comforted the Christian confessor in his dungeon; the pining, beggared victim of fraud and avarice in his starving hovel; the slave — mother, daughter, wife, husband, parent — torn unfeelingly from every kindred tie, and doomed to a life of torturing misery beneath the despotism of brutal ignorance, violence and lust. Thanks be to God, that, as heaven's light can penetrate into recesses inaccessible to the foot of man, so heaven's sympathies and consolations can reach the broken-hearted, to whom no mortal love may carry its kind ministrations. Yes, the good spirit of our God has a work peculiarly his own to accomplish for such. And He knows from how many desolated bosoms the dark gloom of an utter despair has been driven back by the strength which he supplies, and by the vision of that near approaching day when "God shall wipe all tears from off all faces."



CHAPTER IX.

GOD ANOINTED JESUS OF NAZARETH WITH THE HOLY GHOST AND WITH POWER; WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.—PETER.

OUR last chapter terminated with a vivid illustration of this sentiment, as at the gate of Nain we beheld that act of power and compassion, which restored to life and to the endearments of domestic love the only son of a widow. Now we are to be immediately introduced to a different scene, which however we shall find scarcely less beautifully declarative of the same tender, exhaustless sympathy of the Redeemer. He had accepted an invitation to the table of a Pharisee in Capernaum, or some neighboring city. While thus engaged, a woman, who appears to have been brought to repentance from a career of open profligacy, hearing where Christ was, came with rich and costly ointments to express in oriental custom her grateful affection towards him who had rescued her from vice and eternal ruin. With a love too deep for utterance, and an unaffected humility, she stood behind the Saviour as he reclined upon the couch at supper, and bedewing his feet with her tears, wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed them, and poured on them the precious perfume which filled the room with its fragrant odor. It was the external exhibition of the irrepressible gratitude of a pardoned sinner—a child of passion now made penitent and pure—to a forgiving, reconciled God; a mute but eloquent profession of faith in Christ, her Deliverer and Friend. The spirit which moved those tears, that kiss, the breaking of that alabaster box, was a spirit which heaven approves.

But in one bosom of the observers this incident aroused a

Pollution made pure.The Magdalen.

stern and haughty condemnation. The Pharisee had marked it, and with self-righteous and censorious contempt frowned on the tribute of this meek worshipper. He did not speak his displeasure, but in his heart denied the prophetic character of his guest, inferring that Jesus did not know the former life of this woman because he permitted this familiarity. "She is a sinner" was the scornful sentence with which this respectable citizen closed his charity against her. Poor outcast from society, if mercy alone had been lodged in human hands, what relief for her sorrows, what pardon for her sins would she have ever found? The proud boaster of unblemished morals, the "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," had spurned her from their contact as a polluted thing. But Jesus had seen the remorse of an enslavement to guilt mellowing down into a genuine, heart-felt contrition for sin. Angels had rejoiced over the returning wanderer. God had not despised nor rejected her.

"When thy heart's core had quivered to the pain
Thro' every life-nerve sent by arrowy scorn;
When thou didst kneel to pour sweet odors forth
On the Redeemer's feet, with many a sigh
And showering tear-drop, of yet richer worth
Than all those costly balms of Araby;
Then there was joy, a song of joy in heaven,
For thee, the child won back, the penitent forgiven."

How unlike, in Christ's estimation, were the real characters of these two persons before him — the recovered criminal, and the vain, unhumiliated Pharisee. Christ saw the judgment which this man was passing on the scene, and severely did he lay bare its ungenerous, unchristian spirit. This Pharisee had forgotten, or had never known, that his own soul was involved in the same original condemnation with that of the less circumspect transgressor; that if saved,

Moral contrasts.Pardon and peace.

it could only be through the exercise of the same feelings which here he had looked upon with indignation and derision. He owed a debt to God, as well as she ; if hers was five hundred pence, his was fifty, at the smallest. Neither having anything to pay, eternal love had provided a free release for both, would they but confess the debt, and accept, thankfully and repentantly, the discharge. But no token of this disposition had he manifested. And for this, his actual demerit far outweighed hers whom he had spurned because she was by pre-eminence — *a sinner*. “ And Jesus turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss ; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little. And he saith unto her, Thy sins are forgiven ! thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.”

Precious assurance. Who would not prize such a declaration from the Judge of men more than the wealth of worlds. More valuable, than when that widowed mother took back to her arms her living son, was this title to an endless spiritual life with the holy, which was given to her over whom the Saviour pronounced that blessed sentence, “ Thy sins are forgiven.” And so may we be wealthier than the most heavily gold-encumbered devotee of mammon, if upon our soul Christ writes that inerasable word — *forgiveness*. Here is *peace*. They are twin-blessings, born in the same moment, and inseparable. Peace is not the product of piling up on earth a vast and splendid fortune ; a breath may level this

How we may wash Christ's feet.

with the dust. It is not to be had by hoarding together the cherished deeds of a conceited self-goodness ; the goodness of an unregenerate soul is only a gilded rebellion — death wreathed in flowers. What we need more than any temporal, perishable thing, is *pardon* of our guilty disobedience to right, to God. And to make this ours, Jesus died. It will be ours, when like the Magdalen we are found at the feet of Christ, melted into contrition, subdued into thorough, implicit, unquenchable love to our Redeemer.

And if, as we are here taught, they should love much to whom much has been freely forgiven, what should be the strength of our attachment to Him who hath cancelled our iniquities ? And what should we not do to show our tender regard to his cause ? Our Saviour is no more with us in person. We cannot if we would bathe his feet in tears of gratitude. No longer are they travelling earth's dusty highways. We cannot cool his throbbing brow with fragrant odors. But his kingdom is with us, his church is our charge, his honor is in our keeping ; here are the sheep and the lambs of his flock, the poor of his family, his " little ones " — let us not forget nor offend them. If we do indeed love Christ, let us do all we can to advance those interests which he loved even to the end — loves yet with an infinite intensity ; let us sacredly shield his name from reproach by the purity, the amiableness of a consistent, cheerful piety.

Occupied now in a second tour through the villages of Northern Palestine, our Lord healed another demoniac, which so wrought upon the sceptical bystanders that they recklessly charged him with deriving his control of these spirits of evil from a league with the prince of devils. He repelled this wicked aspersion by showing its palpable self-contradiction ; and solemnly warned them of the peril of blaspheming the Spirit of God, in their mad impiety, beyond the

reach of pardon. Demanding some yet more positive signs of his Messiahship, Christ told them that they had had sufficient proof of this, would they but heed it; the difficulty was in their own perverseness; this neutralized his mighty works; the light that was in them was darkness, and how great was that darkness! What was wanting was only a docile, an obedient temper. Had they but this, they would see his character rightly, would love him truly. Had they the disposition to do his and his Father's will, then would this power of sympathy bind them to him as a brother, a sister, a mother.

It is most instructive to note how keenly observant was Christ of every shade of feeling manifested around him, and how quickly and aptly he turned these to the purposes of truth. Thus, being asked now again to a Pharisee's hospitality, with no very hospitable intent as we gather from the sequel, he remarked this person's surprise because he sat down to meat without first washing. The custom thus disregarded had passed from a mere matter of cleanliness into a piece of traditionary, religious ritualism, a meritorious act of piety. Hence, Christ purposely refused it; and then followed up this silent protest against the hollow formalism of these zealots with one of the severest of his recorded denunciations of a pretence of godliness without its power. It was a terrible rebuke of the foolishness which makes clean the outside of the vessel, while the inward part is full of ravening and wickedness; which makes minute account of the small observances of duty, but passes over mercy and the love of God; which lades the consciences of others with burdens grievous to be borne, while it will not touch those burdens with one of its fingers. How must these "woes" have pierced like arrows the ears of these scribes, Pharisees, lawyers, hypocrites! We may imagine with what a voice, an

Following the Saviour.

Self-denial.

eye of severe majesty he could pronounce them, whose stern rebuke once drove from his Father's temple, without a movement of resistance, the thousands of unprincipled worldlings whom He found polluting its sacred courts with their heathenish abominations.

We may not pause even to glance at the varied topics of instruction which, in the familiar conversation of Christ with his friends, or the more formal address to the multitudes, filled up so richly these passing days. From the depths of his own spiritual consciousness, and from the commonest objects of every-day observation, lessons of divine wisdom distilled like dew from his lips, who spake as never man spake. Finding himself pressed upon by a continually increasing concourse of people, Jesus gave command to his disciples to cross over to the opposite or eastern shore of the lake of Tiberias. While making preparations, a certain scribe came to him "saying, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Whether moved by simple curiosity, or real attachment to Christ, we know not; but he received an answer which was well calculated to test his motives, as it strikingly pictured the little of worldly advantage which a companion of Christ was likely to reap; "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Poorer than the poorest, the Redeemer, while wandering amidst his own creation, had not a shelter of his own — not even a tent like the old patriarchs or like the Bedouin of the desert — to share with a follower. Yet is his service to be espoused if men will decide wisely, though it were at the cost of every temporal convenience. First the cross, then the crown. Do we demur? Is the servant then better than his Lord?

"What? was the *promise* made to thee alone?
Art thou the excepted one?

Crossing the lake.A sudden storm.

An heir of glory without grief or pain?
Oh, vision false and vain!
There lies *thy* cross; beneath it meekly bow;
It fits thy stature now;
Who scornful pass it with averted eye,
"T will crush them by and by."

Another met our Lord, a short time after, with a proposal to attend him after he should have first buried a deceased parent. Jesus said to him, Let the dead — the spiritually dead, the insensible sinner — attend to these cares; but thou, whose eyes have been opened to the realities of eternity, to the claims of the unseen world, go thou and preach the kingdom of God. In this and similar instances, Christ did not seek to repress the promptings of filial or domestic affection. He designed to represent that they should only not take precedence, in the heart, of the demands of heaven; that there are circumstances in which God must be served, though at the denial of the tenderest pleadings of human sympathy.

And now embarked in a fisher's boat, on the sea of Galilee, our Lord betook himself to repose, while his disciples, familiar with these waters, should seek the other side. Night had already fallen, and amidst its darkness a storm came on which threatened to engulf their vessel in the waves. This lake, being surrounded by abrupt hills, broken by deep and precipitous gorges, is exposed to frequent and sudden commotions. Lieutenant Lynch, in his *Journal of the U. S. Exploring Expedition in this vicinity*, writes; "While pulling about the lake, a squall swept down one of the ravines, and gave us a convincing proof how soon the placid sea could assume an angry look." * The boat of the disciples, almost filled with water, was ready to sink, when they in great affright fled to their Master for rescue. Had their

* p. 164, octavo ed.

The tempest stilled.Christ may be trusted.

faith been stronger, they would have known that with such a friend on board they could not be lost. Christ, aroused from slumber by their cry, "Lord, save us, we perish!" calmly looked out upon the tempest, and bade it be hushed from its raging. The tumultuous elements knew his voice, obeyed his mandate, and instantly the vessel moved onward upon the surface of the unruffled waters.

The disciples were struck with amazement at this most remarkable proof of a present God. They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, what manner of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him? It is evident from this that they regarded the sudden change in their condition, not as a mere accidental ceasing of the storm, as some have contended, but as an effect produced by the direct power of Jesus. And Christ's permitting them to hold this opinion uncontradicted by him, is the strongest of sanctions to its correctness. Unquestionably they considered him as the author of their escape from a total destruction. But they should not have been alarmed. Rather should they have adored in grateful trust that majesty which could so easily still the convulsions of nature, when the safety of its friends demanded it. It was to them a fit ground of confidence in their Lord. It is equally so to us. Who or what can harm the servants of such a King? Nature submits to him in her wildest moods. Devils tremble at his approach. Who but must feel that his favor is life; that his love is a sufficient passport to immortal glory? If his grace be around us, be within us, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Thrice blessed assurance! But how terrible will also be that arm of Almighty strength,

A terrible visitor.Demoniacal rage.

when righteous indignation shall nerve it to lift the rod of judgment upon the workers of iniquity. These should "fear exceedingly" at the thought of that infinite might which they are provoking to chastise their rebellion. "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?"

Arrived on the eastern shore of the lake, Christ was at once encountered by a man, into whom not one, but a multitude of demoniacal spirits had entered, to whose despotic fury the wretched victim was a most helpless prey. In his bosom there was a fiercer tempest of passion and disordered nature to be quelled, than that which had rent the surface of the stormy sea. For a long time he had thus been tormented, dwelling with others similarly afflicted in the deserted tombs of that neighborhood; "either natural caves, or recesses hewn out of the rock, often so large as to be supported by columns, and with cells upon their sides for the reception of the dead." * There seems to have been in this person a peculiar terribleness, on account of his gigantic strength and exceeding violence. Chains could not bind him. He roved around without clothing, and no man dared to pass by that way. Whether, on perceiving the landing of Christ's company, he rushed down to the water-side to assault them, or was drawn thither, reluctantly but irresistibly, by some vague presentiment of relief, we cannot determine. The conflicting forces within him of satanic rage dominant over his will, and human sensibility struggling yet for place in his distracted soul, are most manifest. He knows his own wretched prostration to foreign malignancy; he crouches beneath its tyranny; he would be delivered from its grasp, yet shrinks in dismay from the Divine hand which has come to heal him. When Christ, to still, it may be, his perturbation by a gen-

* These still are to be found. — Trench on the Miracles, p. 137.

 "Legion."

Entering the swine.

 Why?

the tone, asked him his name, the bitter despair of his spirit burst forth in an answer full of his consciousness of his totally lost condition. He said, "My name is **LEGION**." Perhaps, as Professor Trench suggests, "he had seen the thick and serried ranks of a Roman legion, that fearful instrument of oppression, that sign of terror to conquered nations," and to the Jews especially; and now the memory of its bristling spears and clanging tread flashed over his mind, and this is the word which tells to his miserable thought the complete laying open of his life "to all the incursions of evil, tearing him asunder in infinite ways, now under one hostile and hated power, now under another."

Among the precipices which here jutted out upon the lake-shore, large droves of swine were feeding. The demons, aware that the hour of their expulsion from their human victims had come, for there were two of these unfortunate ones who now were enlisting Christ's pity, asked permission* to enter these animals. We do not precisely comprehend the nature of this transfer, nor the purpose intended by it. As to the latter, it may bear a thought whether it were not designed to give the dispossessed men ocular proof that their former terrible persecutors were indeed cast out and banished to the abyss, no more to return and riot over them. Concerning the manner of this phenomenon, we can say at least this, that such a subjection of inferior, brutal natures to the control of superior, spiritual agencies is certainly not impossible. Maddened by the sudden and strange impulses which thus seized upon them, these animals rushed furiously over the cliffs and perished in the sea. As to the cavil sometimes made, that Christ permitted, in this thing, the

* This deserves to be noticed; nor is it the only instance in which the prayers of the evil have been answered to their ruin.

A request refused.A strange missionary.

destruction of property which was not his own, it is just as applicable and sensible in every case, where, by sudden calamitous providences, life and possessions are destroyed, whether by distempers or the elements of fire or tempest. A ship, struck by lightning on the ocean, and sent to the bottom with every soul on board, were as valid a ground on which to impeach the Divine equity as this.

The man, from whom these demon-spirits had been thus expelled, was now at the feet of Christ sitting clothed and in his right mind. No more a naked, fierce, and blaspheming wanderer among the tombs, he had been restored to the calm enjoyment of the attributes of a reasonable being. More than this, the rectifying energy of Christ's grace had touched, had penetrated his moral sensibilities. As his benefactor was re-embarking to return to the other side of the lake, the subject of his mercy entreated with affectionate earnestness to be allowed to go with him. But Christ did not grant his prayer. There was another work for him to execute in this dark region. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Go, tell thy experience of the power and love of God. "And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis" — the ten cities to the south-east of the lake of Galilee mostly inhabited by Gentile foreigners * — "how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel."

Well might they marvel, for in truth this was an unexpected missionary of the new faith; but a most effective one, I doubt not, as in his own wondrous restoration he carried a demonstration of its value, and a mighty motive of gratitude to proclaim it far and wide. Here is an example for

* Coleman's His. and Geog. of Bible, p. 378.

An example for young converts.

the young convert. In the moments of your near communings with your Saviour, when you feel most tenderly his preciousness to you as a personal friend, you may perhaps also think how delightful it would be to find some retired spot,

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,"

where, excluding all the turmoil and passion of the outer world of wickedness, you might spend your days in pious meditations and devout exercises,

"—— quite on the verge of heaven."

But Christ intended to have no hermits, no solitary dreamers in his church. Has he saved your soul? Then, go home to your friends, to your acquaintance, and tell them who has had compassion on you. Show them that you, once the servant of Satan, are now a right-minded follower of Jesus. Show it by a daily religious life and spirit. Publish it by openly professing your love to the Redeemer. Be you too a missionary of salvation. A lad of fourteen years converted to piety away from home, returned to his father's house, where no altar to heaven had been erected; and with his parents' consent, became the priest of that family offering to God its daily devotions. He wrote me that he hoped his parents would soon be Christians. I should think they must, with such an example of fidelity and love. And this is the way to keep Christ near to us. He "went about doing good." As we imitate him by doing the same, we shall be conscious of the accomplishment, in our experience, of his own promise, "Lo I am with you alway."

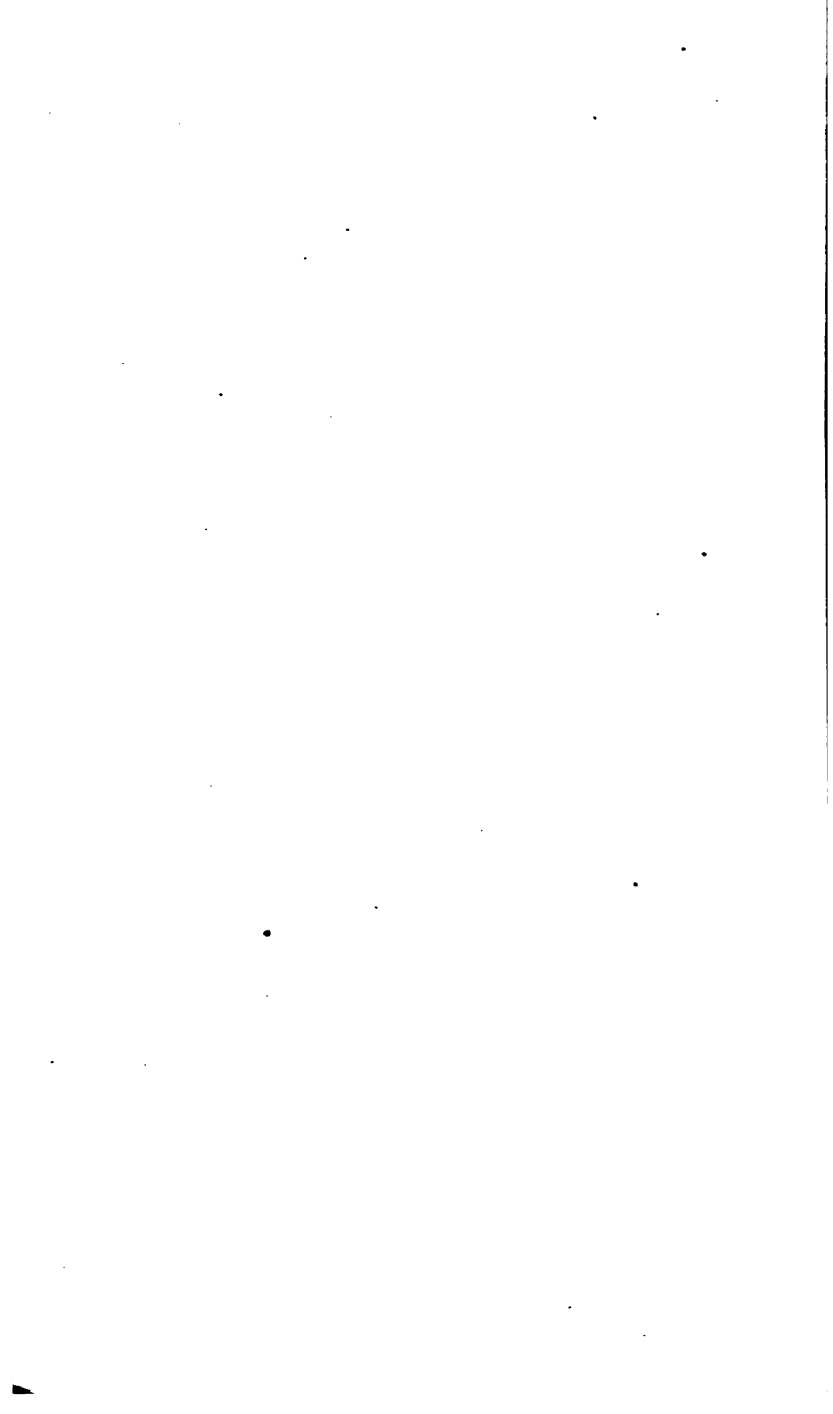
How opposite the behavior of this restored sufferer to that of many, who hope in God's pardoning grace, but hide their

How the heart speaks.

Quiet influence.

light in secret, bury their talent in the earth, lift up no voice of testimony to the mercy which has rescued them from sin and condemnation. Can they have felt the healing virtue of redemption who are thus silent in its praise? Have they ever known the deathlike sickness of conscious guilt who seem so indifferent as to the cure of others, perishing by this fell disease? We judge them not. There may be more life at the heart than is apparent to the observer; more affection to Christ's kingdom there, than it ever receives open evidence of. Possibly thus. Yet, out of the inward abounding of right feeling, the mouth speaketh. Or, if the mouth does not speak, love will find an utterance in significant acts of discipleship. But when neither in word or deed there is any response to the claims of Christian gratitude, how sad is the default, the breach of trust to be there set down. Young disciples, who have recently enough realized the emancipating grace of the Saviour to remember how blessed is its free gift, fix here your determination, by Divine help, to make your lives busy in imparting this same blissful treasure to many, very many of those whom you *have* influenced for evil; whom you *may* influence to be followers together with you of Christ. Nor need you go out of your present sphere to accomplish this. Here is a sweet picture, by Wordsworth, of the quiet influence of a hearty, and it may be a homely piety, glorifying God and blessing man in the every-day rounds of unobtrusive life;—

“How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show;
Not like a temple rich in pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel which protects
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.”



CHAPTER X.

AND WHEN HE SAW THE MULTITUDES, HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION ON THEM, BECAUSE THEY FAINTED, AND WERE SCATTERED ABROAD AS SHEEP HAVING NO SHEPHERD.—MATTHEW.

THE genuine human sympathy of Christ stood broadly and sharply marked against the prevailing selfishness of his age. This always has a stimulated growth, as the spirit of a sincere piety disappears from among a people. Hence heathenism is but the most complete and hardened idolatry of self. Little of a truly religious disposition was there in the generation to whom God's love in Christ was personally manifested. Consequently, their difficulty of appreciating his freedom from those trammels of prejudice and caste which narrowed in their interest to the circle of their own social relations. In beautiful contrast with this proud, exclusive, repulsive temper of those times, Christ seemed to find pleasure in traversing all bounds and barriers of sectional and party bigotry; and in finding scope for his compassionateness in all spheres of surrounding life, from the highest to the lowest. But though he shunned not the former of these positions, his feelings evidently inclined much more strongly towards the latter. The obscure, the neglected, the openly depraved classes of the community ever engrossed much of his attention. It was with him a practical maxim; "They that be whole," in their own estimation, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." The Scribes and the Pharisees felt not their spiritual disease, did not value the offer of a cure. But the more candid, though not perhaps more wicked of the lowlier in life

Christ's human sympathy.The hem of the garment.

acknowledged their danger, were sensible of their need of a physician. In their abodes, Christ was a more welcome guest than in the mansions of the rich and influential. The multitudes, the masses of the common people, impoverished by the miserable vacuities of their religious guides, scattered abroad and fainting for some solid sustenance of truth, like sheep without a shepherd, these moved his strongest pity. And often did his visits among them leave traces of renovating mercy.

Not only was the real excellence of this conduct a mystery to most of Christ's contemporaries of the leading orders of society, but it was a matter of frequent and indignant censure. Thus, while near this time he was honoring with his presence, and profiting by his conversation, the company assembled at the feast of Levi, many murmured at the disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Christ reproved their self-conceit, their disdainful self-ignorance, by the severe but hope-inspiring declaration, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Thanks to the Infinite Goodness that the work of human redemption was entrusted to one, whose spirit was as free from prejudice and pride, as it was from impurity.

While yet engaged in conversation at the publican's house, an urgent request was brought in person by Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, that Jesus would immediately come to the help of his only daughter of about twelve years of age, who lay at the point of death. As he went, a large concourse of bystanders followed him. In the crowd was a woman who for many years had been incurably afflicted with an issue of blood. Seizing, as she doubtless supposed, her only opportunity, with conflicting emotions of fear and confidence, she pressed her way to Jesus, and touched the *hem* or *fringe* of his mantle. To this part of the Hebrew dress, a peculiar

Love demands confession.

sacredness was attached in the common regard. Hence, the mere formalists of that day, to appear conspicuously devout, were in the habit of making very broad borders to their garments. This woman may have had something of this superstition in her mind. But if so, it did not cause her rejection by our Lord. He was much more lenient to the weaknesses of ignorance than to the deceptions of malice. She had a spirit of determined endeavor. "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Her object was at once secured. She was sensible of an entire cure. Christ was aware of the same fact. It was not for self-information that he inquired, "Who touched me?" The disciples were altogether disconcerted at this apparently most unseasonable question. They could give no aid to its answer, nor could the crowd, unconscious of this silent restoration. Yet the subject of this mercy saw that she could not be hid. Her benefactor knew the whole process of her thought and act. Thus revealed, "she came trembling and falling down before him, declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately." Her procedure met with no rebuke. Her urgency, her confidence were approved; and she departed with the gracious commendation; "Daughter, be of good comfort, go in peace." Let the conduct of Christ, in making this person disclose and confess her cure, teach this lesson, that he would have none hide the gift of God that is in them; that grace is not conferred upon any for private use and enjoyment alone; that there is an important personal good to be secured by openly acknowledging Divine compassions dispensed to us; that it is due to God's love to us frankly and publicly to return our praise to him. A Christian is but half blessed — is, I had almost said, but half a Christian — who tries to wear his religion unprofessed

The Ruler's daughter.

Jewish mourning.

among men. Let the unregenerate heart behold here, also, a fit example for its imitation. Diseased by a sickness, which all other physicians can make only worse instead of better, let it see how earnestly it should at once press to Christ for healing; with what believing confidence, with what melting tenderness, it should take hold of his offers of salvation; how certainly by so doing it will gain relief; how kindly it will hear the assurance of Jesus, "Be of good comfort!" But had that sufferer let slip that passing moment, how surely had she lost the rich reward. As surely as thousands have lost the soul by present neglect.

Meantime, the daughter of Jairus had died, and when Jesus reached the house, a company of mourners had assembled, in accordance with eastern usage, to bewail the dead. Christ's remark to the parents that she only *slept* is to be taken, not as though this were simply a swoon, for so he said also of Lazarus after four days of extinct life. It was, as now, a common phrase for the state of the departed, but was here used to intimate that her death was as a sleep from which she would soon be aroused. "The noise and tumult of these retained mourners appear to have begun immediately after the person expired. The longest and most violent acts of sorrow are when they wash the body, when they perfume it, when they carry it out to be interred." * This clear evidence of the actual decease of the maiden was in progress, when Christ arrived at the scene of distress. At once suspending the confused sounds of woe, and putting out the populace, whose mercenary, scornful tempers were in no harmony with so sacred a scene as this, Christ approached the couch of the dead, took her by the hand, saying, Maid, arise! and her spirit came again, and she arose straightway, and he delivered her to her wonder-smitten parents.

* Bush.

Thus, for the second time, did Jesus triumph over the monarch Death. In the language of the pious Doddridge, "In how majestic and yet how gentle a manner did Christ address himself to this admirable work. Damsel, I say unto thee, arise! and immediately she heard and obeyed. Thus shall he with equal ease call forth myriads of his saints, who now seem perished in the dust; and it may be said with regard to them also, they are not dead, but sleep." So equally of those who have died in sin. A resurrection-day awaits them likewise, but an awakening "to shame and everlasting contempt."

Departing from the ruler's house, two blind men followed Christ imploring a cure. They cried, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us!" Their prayer was granted. Why, in this case and a few others, Christ saw fit to impose silence on the subjects of his miraculous help, while generally the reverse was his practice, must find a solution in his own perception of some strong temporary and local propriety, prescribing such a course. It is idle to seek here any clue to an unworthy artifice or conspiracy of fraud. Hardly had the blind men left him seeing, than a dumb man, a demoniac, is brought to him; and again, a victim of demoniacal power is released from that sore thralldom, while the tongue of the dumb breaks forth in gladness. That was a marked half-day in the life of Jesus, which had restored the dead to life, the sick to health, the blind to sight, the dumb to speech, the demoniac to rational self-control.

It is to us almost incredible that any one should have rejected the proof thus exhibited of Christ's divine character and commission. Everywhere he displayed the most masterly control over the natural world. His authority covered all cases. He was ready for any emergency. By a word, one substance was made to assume the properties of another. As

Nazarene scepticism.Still active among us.

easily the tempestuous sea was stilled ; while not one form of disease or physical infirmity proved too stubborn for his subjugation ; while satanic agency, and even death itself restored their victims at his mandate. All this was done in the open view of men, with no attempt at concealment, with instant results, with ordinarily no means employed save a simple command, but where some process intervened, with no connection whatever between this antecedent as a cause, and the accompanying miracle. Thus was Christ now multiplying, in deeds of supernatural goodness and power, the daily evidence of his claim to the title of Messiah, Redeemer, King of men. Yet the number of genuine believers in his pretensions was as nothing well nigh to the thousands who saw and marvelled at his acts. Passing again to Nazareth amongst his family relations, his widening renown arrested their deeper wonder ; they said to one another, in their quick and hurried conversations—we can almost see the little groups of excited villagers at the corners of the streets—“ Whence hath this man these things ; and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands ? ” But proud heart-risings prevailed here also still against the indications of judgment and knowledge. “ He marvelled at their unbelief. ” Was there any valid reason for this feeling in Christ ? Has he yet occasion for the same feeling ? When people now sit down coolly to take away, piece by piece, all the historic foundations of Gospel faith—these records of his own god-like deeds among the rest ; when, thus undermined by a speculative criticism, the whole heaven-built temple comes falling in fragments around their misused understandings, confounded by a lawless scepticism with the ruinous rubbish of pagan and human religions ; when the earth-bound and blinded vision can discern in the movements of Christ’s re-

How it now operates.Commission of the Twelve.

generating grace, and in the effusions of God's Spirit upon men, no agent but a distempered imagination ; when the believer, resting on the proof which, from Christ's ancient works, from the accomplishment of prophecy, and from its own internal character reproduced consciously, if imperfectly, in his restored nature, assures us that this Gospel contains a satisfactory solution of the grand problems of God, the soul, salvation, and immortal hope ; but nevertheless all this illumination of truth to the most earnest and patient investigators is met by the supercilious sneer, that they know not what they believe ; that an inspired revelation of religious doctrine and duty is a dream ; that the Bible has no supernatural, moral authority, even if its historic authenticity be partially allowed ; when thus God's rational creation is thrown back into the " chaos and dark night " of a Christless, hopeless, aimless, helpless heathenism — has the glorious Author and Finisher of our faith less cause to marvel at men's unbelief, than when the sceptics of his generation said, " by the prince of devils, casteth he out devils ! "

Though the company of the twelve apostles had been publicly ordained to their ministry, they had thus far been mostly retained in the society of their Master and Teacher, studying his movements, and gaining a clearer insight, a fuller participation of the nature, the spirit of their delegated trust. Now the time of their first considerable dispersion had arrived. Such was the dearth of spiritual knowledge, the demand for missionary labor, so plenteous the harvest, so few the laborers to gather it, that Christ no longer withheld them from the work to which they had been designed. First their appointment was among the Jews, not because of their greater accessibleness, but from their nearer relation to the Old Testament religious dispensation, from which the continuation of God's kingdom was to take its new departure,

*Spirit of their work.**Its exceeding solemnity.*

according to covenant promises, to the remoter tribes of mankind. These missionary instructions of Christ to his disciples form an admirable model of all similar counsels. Representing their Lord, they were to go forth in the simplicity, the unostentatiousness of his personal habits, relying on a protecting Providence for their safe keeping ; yet, "as sheep in the midst of wolves," having a wary care of their own well-being. In his spirit of love, they were to treat all men with Christian gentleness and courtesy ; but if rejected and mistreated, they were to bear their message to the more candid and impressible. They were to prepare themselves, in a martyr's self-devotement, for a martyr's fate, if that exigency should arrive ; for, in the spirit of their Father, they were to preach a Gospel which should bring hotly around them the hatred of man. Enough for them was it to risk persecution like their Master, who had come, not in the first and immediate purpose, to send peace on earth but a sword ; the truths of whose kingdom should make a man's foes of those of his own household. They were to preach a discriminating, an uncompromising, a cross-imposing faith, in the front of a world's proud and self-indulgent and easily exasperated ungodliness. They were to do it under the practical influence of the truth that God was for them, let who would be against them. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

There is an exceedingly affecting solemnity in this commissioning of these men thus to co-operate with their beloved Leader in so unselfish, so divine an enterprise. Here was something which took fair hold on immortality ; which grasped the eternities. There was life in it — blissful, endless. But just to think, that should these humble, unknown men shake off the dust of their feet against a disbelieving people, then should Christ's fearful decree settle down upon them,

Offices limited and perpetual.

as the sentence of perpetual doom; "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" Miraculous gifts were theirs, moreover, with which to approve their doctrines. These they employed as agents of Christ's investing power. This was no inherent ability of their own; no delegated divinity, which is not transferable. It was the instrumental acting of God's omnipotence, under the promptings of his wisdom. Thus they returned to Jesus "with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us, *through thy name*." They knew to whom to ascribe this wonder-working might, for in his own clear title to its possession, Christ had empowered them to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." *

These miraculous endowments have ceased in the Church; their modern assumption is among the lowest arts of religious charlatanry. But though God no longer sets in his earthly kingdom, "miracles, gifts of healing, diversities of tongues," other offices as ancient and divinely authenticated as any of these, have a permanent life wherever Christianity has secured a foothold. "Teachers, helps, governments," the instruction of doctrine, the guardianship of duty, and of the ordinances and discipline of Christ's house, which is his Church—these belong to the unchanging and universal wants of a religious culture. Let us not presume to a higher wisdom than God's. To disesteem the institutions, the instrumentalities by him appointed for human regeneration and sanctification, is to commit a great self-injury, is to distrust and to dishonor God. The pretence of a superior spiritual advancement and freedom may sometimes attempt to carry itself above the clear demands of the order and covenant-obligations of a Christian society; may set a small value

* Luke 9; Matthew 10; Mark 6.

Hurtful extremes.The feast of the five thousand.

upon the ministry of Gospel truth, may throw off, as a mere external ritualism, the most sacred seals of Christ's redemption. Be cautious here of one of Satan's deadliest snares. A servile *churchism* has, indeed, but little of Christ's spirit in it; a factious, turbulent, licentious *come-outer-ism* has even less. When a man becomes so holy that he has no further use for those helps to heaven which Christ, through his apostles, gave to his church militant for a perpetual blessing, a staff of permanent support, the strong probability is that he will soon add to his creed some *practical* exemplification of the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, for which the angel of the church in Pergamos received the rebuke of the Spirit of God.* Too much liberty in one direction is very apt to run into other excesses of self-indulgence.

The fidelity of John the Baptist, in rebuking the vices of Herod's court, had brought his long imprisonment to an end by a cruel death. Jesus now withdrew himself privately with his disciples into a desert place near to the city of Bethsaida, on the north-eastern shore of Gennesaret. The people, discovering his retreat, flocked about him, whom he instructed and relieved of various physical ills. The evening was already near, and the disciples were anxious that the crowds should disperse among the neighboring villages to procure sustenance. Christ, though seemingly asking counsel of his followers in this emergency, was aware of the exact state of the occasion and of his own intentions. The case was this. Some five thousand wayfarers were here gathered in a secluded spot, and for their night's repast there could be found in the company no more than five barley loaves and two fishes. This transaction is fully and harmoniously reported by each of the four Evangelists. Christ countermanded the suggestion of

* Rev. 2: 14.

A creative act.Popular excitement.

the disciples to send the people away. "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Overruling the surprise and bewilderment of so apparently impossible a command, he caused the thousands to be seated on the grass; the blessing of heaven was craved upon this novel entertainment, and the distribution commenced. It proceeded, until the wants of all were satisfied. And when the supper was ended, there were left far more of the fragments of the table than was the original supply.

We in vain attempt to philosophize upon the process of this miracle. Every theory of its explanation falls most unsatisfactorily below our sense of its supernatural demands, until we consent to place it simply on the footing of a creative act of Omnipotence. To say that this was the most astonishing of all our Lord's works thus far, would be hardly proper; for among the exhibitions of an Infinite power we cannot introduce intelligibly the idea of a gradation. Yet its palpable strangeness was most conspicuous. Its effect was instantaneous and positive. "This is of a truth that prophet," the Messiah-Deliverer, "who should come into the world," exclaimed the excited host as they rose from their grassy seats. With one acclaiming shout they were ready to proclaim him king of victory, and to march under his mighty leadership straight to the vacant throne of David. They would hardly wait his approval of the act, but were on the point by force to organize at once this new career of liberty and glory. Christ perceived their object, and quietly but effectually thwarted it by departing again "into a mountain himself alone."

At very wide intervals, the history of our race summons us to contemplate, with admiration and reverence, that greatness of soul which leads the patriot, after achieving his country's independence, to lay down his easily retained authority,

Patriot-Christians.

Washington and Napoleon III.

for a voluntary resumption of a private station. At the head indisputably of all this pure loftiness of purpose, we are wont to point to our own Washington, when, resigning his position as commander of the hearts as well as the arms of his nation's soldiery, he threw aside the trappings of rank, turned his back on an actually offered crown of regal power, and walked modestly, sublimely down into the tranquil shades of domestic seclusion and love. It places him at an immeasurable altitude above the renowned heroes who have abused the influence, to selfish aggrandizement, which circumstances have lodged within their control. Space off, if you can, for example, the distance between the characters and deserts of the Father of our country, and the man who has climbed, at the sacrifice of every principle of truth and human nobleness, to the imperial throne of Napoleon. Look at that earth-bound, desperate struggle, as vile as selfish; then look at our American patriot and sage, and wonder at the contrasts of which human nature is capable. But look again, and study that more than mortal virtue which could not be seduced to ambitious aspirings, when, with an escort of thousands, inflamed by national wrongs, enthusiastic in their confidence of his triumphs, Christ was beckoned to a tempting prize. It was an age of political disturbance. The Roman world was ringing with the din of conflicting armies, led on to pillage and conquest by adventurous chiefs. The subaltern of to-day was the fortunate hero of to-morrow, spreading his bannered eagles over subjugated provinces, the recompense of his daring and success. But the sword which Christ had unsheathed on earth had in it none of this temper. His symbol was a *cross* before a *crown*. Contrast his spirit with the efforts of other Christs, in after days, to enlist a military support, to grasp political ascendancy. Look at Mohammed, with his fiery Saracens, scouring with scimitar and death the plains of

Mohammed and Jesus.Double-handed philanthropy.

Arabia. It is worth noting, that no one is conscious of any feeling of revulsion, as though he had suddenly encountered a great moral inconsistency between faith and practice, when he reads of the strangely mingled elements of religious, and warlike, and sensual, and dishonest intrigue, in such a scheme of imposture as the "False Prophet" delusion of the sixth, or the *nineteenth* centuries, whether an eastern or a western continent be the scene of its bad achievements. But what should we have thought had Jesus Christ submitted to be involved in these projects and complots of empire? How would it have spoiled him to us as a spiritual Guide, Master, and Redeemer! Deity discovers itself most significantly in this fixed disinclination and refusal to be entangled in these low, impure alliances of earth.

We not only see in this incident how wholly disinterested and heavenward was the spirit of Jesus; we have another development of his readiness in every possible way to benefit the needy. Admirably did Christ appreciate all varieties of human wants. His love was not so spiritualized that it had no eye to purely physical distresses. Nor was it so superficial that it could see nothing else than these. It took in both the soul's and the body's necessities. He was ever seeking the lost to save them; and he could also provide convenient food for the hungry. So is not our philanthropy in harmony with Christ's, unless it has range enough for a like embrace. That love to man which is diligent to care for his temporal welfare, but never thinks anxiously about his eternal interests, is not a Christian love. It has in it nothing characteristically distinct from the sentiments of a refined paganism. On the other hand, to think of nothing but men's spiritual state and prospects, as regards our duties towards them, is a most defective exhibition of the mind that was in Christ. We have not the resources of Omnipotence at our command; may have

Twelve baskets-full remaining.

indeed very little of ability at all to relieve a suffering fellow man. But such as we have should not be withheld, when the poor, the sick, the friendless, the wanderer pleads at our door for succor. Let our Christian principles unfold freely their human and their spiritual tendencies, and then, in our ministrations of kindness to the bodies and to the souls of men, we shall be lending a double hand to the restoration of our race. Before such a Christianity, impelling the movements of the universal Church, how long could the dark fortresses either of religious or civil wrong, hold fast their captives ?

A single thought more. Who would not feast at Christ's table, the provisions of which are so exhaustless ? Unlike all the banquets which sin can spread for us, that which Jesus blesses will never be all consumed. "Twelve baskets full" will remain for to-morrow's refreshment, after the thousands have all partaken ; and so on to eternity. As are our wants, so will Christ multiply and continue for us the rich entertainment of his love, if we will but listen obediently to the call which he makes to us to come to his banqueting house. Jesus is the same as when he scattered so freely his favors among the followers of his earthly footsteps. "Follow thou him, and he will receive, instruct, heal, feed, and save thy soul unto eternal life."

CHAPTER XI.

I AM THAT BREAD OF LIFE. — JOHN.

If it had not passed into a proverb that "truth is stranger than fiction," we might easily fancy that the writers of the life of Jesus were taking us through some rapidly shifting scenes of an imaginary creation rather than over the solid ground of historic transactions. This, however, is not the only, though doubtless it is the most conspicuous instance, where the sober narrative of most startling and contradictory facts has moved steadily onward through alternations which the boldest invention would never have ventured to originate. But in everything that is real there is a naturalness, amidst whatsoever seeming improbability, which is clearly distinguishable from the spirit of romance. That temporary outburst of popular favor, which would have made Christ a king after his last stupendous act of power, was in broadest contrast with the prevailing insensibility of those multitudes to his true nature and claims. Yet that exhibition excites in us no surprise. We might not have expected it, but we receive its occurrence as not at all forced or unlikely. With equal ease can we pass from this expression of enthusiastic applause to its entire opposite of angry resentment towards his person from these same witnesses of his unchallengeable life, so wayward and unreasonable is human passion.

Immediately after the feeding of the five thousand in the desert, the disciples had been sent away by Christ from the dangerous influence of this sudden tumult of political ardor in his behalf. It would have been a very different thing for

Another stormy night.The disciples now alone.

their still too ambitious aspirings to have resisted this tempting lure, than for the unselfish spirit of their Master. They had consequently embarked by his direction on the sea of Galilee, while he had withdrawn from the agitated populace to a mountain for devotion. And now again their vessel was overtaken on these same waters by a tempestuous night. Driven by contrary winds and tossed by the rolling waves, they found themselves in imminent jeopardy. Until about three hours after midnight they had vainly rowed for land, having made not more than four or five miles progress. On a former similar occasion, Christ was with them in the ship, and they had but to awaken him from his pillow in their extremity. It was not without a reason that, on this second night of storms, they were not thus accompanied. For the greater trial of their constancy, for the severer but most valuable discipline of their spiritual strength, they had no infallible pilot now on board. They had not their Master's hand to grasp amid this howling of the elements. How shall the child ever grow to a manly fortitude, how step firmly along life's pathways of doubt and danger, if he must always have the arm of parental support to lean upon? God educates our souls, as nature develops our bodies, by throwing us upon our own resources, but not by abandoning us to ourselves. Christ knew the peril of his followers. At the right moment he came to their rescue. Through the rifted gloom they see a human form walking composedly on the boiling surges. Alarmed at this strange apparition, imagining that no shape of material substance could thus find footing on the treacherous deep, for in fact one of the ancient symbols of an *impossibility* was two feet standing on the surface of water, the voyagers cried out in terror, as if in this advancing being some unquiet wanderer from the shadowy world were coming to intensify still more the horrors of their condition. But, if

The rescue.Peter on and in the water.

they knew it not, their Deliverer was near. "And straightway Jesus spake to them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid!"

Overjoyed at this timely meeting, Peter, with characteristic impetuosity, desired to go on the water to Jesus. We do not understand his request — "*If it be thou, bid me come*" — as implying any doubt of Christ's identity, or as proposing a test by which to ascertain the reality of his Master's presence. The interpretation is rather, Lord, *as it is thou*, permit me to come to thee; and the sentiment embodied is that of grateful, eager delight. Christ bade him adventure. Yet Christ did not give him any express pledge of safety in this attempt. He said, "Come." But in every command of God a promise is really folded up. The bud of obedience will always expand into the flower of fruition and reward. Peter set forward. For a little distance, with his eye on the Lord, his faith was sufficient. But losing sight of his Protector, or thinking more of his risks than of his reliance, he began to sink, and cried, "Lord, save me!" That prayer was enough. The hand of Jesus caught his friend and rescued him from a watery grave.

A shade of thought has here been aptly suggested by another. In Christ's gentle rebuke of Peter's faltering confidence, he says not, Wherefore didst thou *come*? but wherefore didst thou *doubt*? Christ never chides us for undertaking all that he directs, however great or appalling the labor. He only reproves us for distrusting a moment his infinite ability to help us successfully through the most trying passages of duty or of peril in his service.

Once more in the vessel with their beloved Lord, relieved from alarm and subdued into solemn admiration of his god-like authority, the disciples "came and worshipped him." We find no disclaimer from him, here or elsewhere, of such

A meditation.The living bread.

homage. He ever received it as his own proper tribute. Thee, O Christ, *we* also *worship*, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, forever and ever !

It is a joyous conviction that divine succors ever wait upon him who treads the path of fidelity to God, be it by land or sea. Christ knows the position of each of his servants. They may be thrown into many a difficult strait, may be pelted by many a midnight storm ; the wrathful passions of wicked men may be slipped out against them in unrestrained tumultuousness ; destruction and death may seem to have taken post upon their road to stop their advance, even as the lions, which menaced the Pilgrim on either side of the narrow way. But He will chain those lions, He will control those threatening omens, whose calm tones spake peace to his disciples' fears amid the stormy waters of that Galilean sea. One, "like unto the Son of God," walks amidst all the tempests, midst every furnace, where his people are buffeted, afflicted.

"Let me but hear my Saviour say,
Strength shall be equal to thy day —
Then I'll rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient grace."

The report of the miraculous repast of the five thousand having spread widely abroad, as they scattered themselves over the neighboring districts, a great body of people again sought Jesus on the farther side of the lake. Taking his form of discourse from that recent event, Christ delivered a richly instructive, a deeply impressive address, to this vast congregation, all occupied with his own true character and business upon earth. He had fed the bodies of many of them with perishable food. This in its place was necessary. But there was another life to be sustained, another bread for

Hard sayings.Truth not to be retracted.

its nourishment, than this of the earthly and temporal. "I am that bread of life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that living bread that came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him."

This earnest and direct declaration by Christ of his redeeming power, of his absolute necessity to the sinner's life, of salvation alone attainable by virtue of a union in the essential powers and purposes of our souls with him, and through him with God, displeased the Jews and some even of those who had avowed feelings of attachment to his person and mission. "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." They said, "this is a hard saying, who can hear it?" It was an affecting moment to him, who well knew nevertheless the eternal truth of these *hard sayings*, who knew the importance of their docile acceptance to the well-being of those around him. But did Christ, in order to hold their friendship, to retain popularity, to gather large accessions of admiring adherents, smooth away the sharp angles and edges of this "hard" doctrine of grace, which he had thus plainly, annoyingly announced? Listen. "He said unto them, doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" resuming my ancient dignities as God; sitting on a throne of competent jurisdiction over all the interests bound up in human salvation and divine government? "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." And thus vital and pregnant with spiritual energies, they were not to be sacrificed, compromised, veiled, at any demand of displeased or wounded feeling. Nor must this doctrine of

To whom shall we go?Christ our sole refuge.

Christ now be thus betrayed, through any undue softness of sympathy, through any seductions of vanity or flattery. Life hangs by this thread, endless, satisfying. Christ took nothing back to stay those departing footsteps, though "many" went away and never returned. But turning in sorrow to his little selected family of the original twelve, he said, "will ye also go away?" Then spake once more that fervent man whom Jesus had rescued from the engulfing waves; "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

With equal pathos may we repeat this interrogatory, this asseveration. We, who have fallen under the power of Satan, where shall our spirits find emancipation from this thralldom, but in thy compassions, thou Son of God, thou Christ, Redeemer! To whom shall we repair for food to nourish our souls unto the strength and glory of immortality but to thee, thou bread of heaven! Give us to eat of thy flesh, to drink of thy blood, in the true intent and fellowship of this high mystery, that thus we may dwell in thee, and thou in us, evermore!

But, if we will not make this prayer our own, where then shall we betake ourselves for repose and safety? Where went those offended ones who turned back from Jesus and from his hard sayings? Did they go to the world for peace? Did they find it there? Did they go to their own consciences? What could these do but condemn them? Where shall we go? To business, or pleasure; to friends, fame, or folly? Seek for the delicious grape on the wild thorn-bush, but look not for the calm of an intelligent, inward satisfaction in the excitements, the vanities of earth. Shall we retreat upon our own moral endeavors, and toil to build up a mountain of good-deserts, from the top of which we may plant a ladder

Christ passes westward.The woman of Canaan.

whereby to scale heaven? That ladder will but stand upon a sand-wreath and lean against a cloud. And when, in God's great day, we shall essay to climb it to a place beside his throne, instead of stepping from its dizzy summit to joy eternal, one wide, deep plunge amid nether shadows will bury in perpetual disappointment this delusive hope. Jesus, Master, we know not whither else to go in our sins, our temptations, our fears, our distresses, our mortal and our immortal wants, save to Thee — to thy dying love, thy living intercessions.

How sufficient and reliable is this resort, our narrative still most engagingly exhibits. Passing over towards the Mediterranean sea, our Lord visited the districts bordering upon the Gentile territories of Tyre and Sidon. We do not know that he, at any point of his travels, went beyond the boundaries of the Hebrew land: for, though his kingdom was to receive all nations through the free grace of a world-wide redemption, yet as to his immediate, personal mission it was arranged, that he should not go "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When, therefore, in this heathen neighborhood a woman of the Canaanitish stock, a Syro-Phenician came to him with a plea for an afflicted daughter, Christ at first seemed to treat her as if quite beyond the limits of his kind offices. For a while, indeed, he appeared not even to be aware of her presence. And when his followers pointed her out to him with an impatient request to be rid of her troublesome importunity, Christ merely told her that her people were not the subjects of his special thought or mercy. This was temporarily the fact. Still some rare benefits from his compassionate power had already flowed across these barriers to the children of the aliens. And now another was to be added to this number. But Christ saw fit to vary very much the methods of his benevolence, as different objects ap-

*Seeming harshness.**Love's license of expression.*

pealed to its exercise. And the instance now present brought out some unusual features of his discipline which are worthy of our analysis and reflection.

Christ put on more of the semblance of indifference, of severity, here, than in any other of his recorded dealings with the unfortunate. This must not be construed into a charge of dissimulation, for love has a license as to the times and modes of its manifestations ; is not bound to an unvarying display of its more natural and spontaneous expressions, but may modify or suppress these for transient utilities. There was really no hardness of heart in Jesus towards this daughter of the Gentiles, when he answered never a word to her petitions ; or when, as still she entreated, he bade her remember that she was not of Israel's chosen race ; or when again, as pressing to his feet in irrepressible desire " she worshipped him saying, Lord, help me " — he strangely repulsed her tearful supplication with the almost harsh and cruel rejoinder, " It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." We know that these words corresponded to no inward feeling or purpose of disinclination in Jesus to grant this woman's wish. She seemed to know this also. We can almost see, that while Christ was thus holding her at a distance in forbidding speech, there was a kindling of mercy in his deep, soft eye, and a yielding cadence in his tones, which promised all that his language appeared to refuse.

In some previous passages of his life, we have beheld the Saviour making the offer of aid to the afflicted, freely going down into the scenes of distress to convey relief and consolation. In most instances, a single appeal to his help was enough. These aspects of his free sympathy and beneficence are to teach us the lesson of a most undoubting confidence in his love ; to smooth our daily path of childlike approach to

Christian liberty, perseverance, submission, victory.

his throne of grace. Here, on the contrary, repeated prayers had to overcome seeming obstacles to their acceptance. Christ pressed this suppliant to the extremest point of boldness in pursuing her suit. There was a phase of Christian experience to be brought out; a view of Christian liberty in dealing with God; an expression of God's willingness to be thus besieged with human urgencies; and of the relation of this earnestness of desire to the higher developments of the Christian life, which demanded a procedure like this that so tried this mother's constancy. Christ saw that there was faith in her of elastic strength enough to bear without breaking this yet more thorough attempering. Wonderful was her pertinacity, admirable was her adroitness in managing her plea. If the dogs may not have the children's loaf on the table, may they not have the crumbs under it? Thus did she, while meekly assenting to the outcast lot of a menial, nevertheless lay fearless claim to a menial's portion in the common household. This is submission. It endorses God's judgment of our personal unworthiness. If not a son, then let me be a servant, is its sentiment. It humbles itself just as low as truth demands. It quarrels not with God's severest utterances of its degradation, its unqualified ill-desert. It bows to the very dust when God passes in his holiness. This is prayer. It makes God's very statements of its abjectness a reason why God should lift it up, and bless it with hope and life. This is faith—Christian faith; which can see, and grasp, and possess, through all these disheartenments, against all these obstacles, the blessings which man no more needs than God has promised to man because he needs them, and because they must be his whose spirit draws nigh to God in such a temper of submission, prayer, and faith. Great was thy faith, O woman! therefore was thy whole request obtained. And precious beyond gold that perishes has been

Francis Quarles.Media in miracles.

the legacy of thy example to the church, as it has taught many a trembling believer to gird himself, from apparent failures and refusals, to yet more strenuous endeavors like a prince to prevail with God.

Behold, then, the fulness of our encouragement in drawing nigh to God. He loves that ardor of desire which will wrestle with the angel even "to the breaking of the day;" which is but strengthened by the deferral of the wished for blessing; which, obtaining its request, is inspired with yet a loftier ambition to appropriate heaven's treasures of grace and joy. One of the earliest of the religious poets of our language has quaintly said,

"Man's plea to man is, that he never more
Will beg, and that he never begged before;
Man's plea to God is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and therefore sues again.
How good a God we serve, that, when we sue,
Makes his old gifts the examples of his new."

Out of a great variety of miraculous works, which now accompanied Christ's return to his former retreats along the shores of the sea of Galilee, Mark has recorded a single one, probably because it presented some points of difference to the ordinary method of our Lord in removing physical infirmities. The case was a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech. In relieving these disabilities, Christ did not rely, as generally, upon a mere word of command, but adopted some intervening, visible manipulations; he placed his finger in the deaf man's ear, he touched his tongue with spittle. We can assign no other cause to these acts, save that they might assure the sufferer of the reality of advancing help. They possessed no magical or medicinal potency; were not efficient in any sense; but were only the tokens of

"Ephphatha."The sigh of Jesus.

that energy which was inherent in Jesus. Without their exhibition at all, Christ's simple "Ephphatha—be opened," would have sufficed. We catch here a pleasing glimpse of Christ's bearing and emotions in scenes of distress. He did not go among these wrecks of humanity with a hard, professional air, as a surgeon walks over a recent battle-field. Though these applicants for his aid were multiplying by thousands, the familiar contact of their painful and often repulsive ills did not indurate his sympathies. As Jesus bent over this victim of misfortune, looking to heaven "he sighed" in deep commiseration of this calamity. That sigh was full of Christ's fraternal tenderness of spirit for the afflicted, as that heavenward glance was the spontaneous expression of a consciousness of the entire co-operation of his Father and himself in all these acts of mercy, these attestations of his Divine credentials. Here, then, again we have a heart throbbing with pity towards the sorrowing and the suffering among men, while that same heart is the infinite receptacle of the vast and beatific emotions of God. What a friend for adversity is this! And who shall tell us that, in yon house of mourning, beside that coffin-lid which hides in death the beautiful and the loved, there may not be breathed the same sighings of sympathy which Jesus so often breathed on earth, though our ears be too dull to hear the celestial murmur. We could not but love our Saviour less, if we thought he had less of a brother's feelings now than when he dwelt in the flesh.

In the miracle which immediately followed, of the supplying of the hunger of four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fishes, there is nothing materially unlike the former act of the same description. It seemed to be one of the unavoidable liabilities of such immense and poorly provisioned crowds assembling in unfrequented places, that they would

Food again multiplied.Bishop Heber.

suffer greatly from the scarcity of needful food. To remove these inconveniences, by the exertion of omnipotent authority, would appear to be one of the most natural manifestations of Christ's benevolence. Satan could not tempt him to remedy the effects of his own long fast by changing stones into bread ; but to relieve the three days' abstinence of these fainting multitudes, he saw no impropriety in again falling back upon the prerogatives of the Creator. The exigency was met. The thronging thousands were satisfied, whence, they saw not, save as still his hand distributed the unexhausted repast. " His hand ;" and why should *we* look beyond this for our own daily comforts ; why, for those spiritual gifts which minister growth to that part of our nature which is undying ? His hand — does it not hold the sceptre of government, does it not bear the key of the treasure-house of heaven's eternal blessings ? What do we need which Christ cannot impart ? What more can we require, if he makes us partakers of himself ?

" Bread of the world, in mercy broken ;
Wine of the soul, in mercy shed ;
By whom the words of life were spoken,
And in whose death our sins are dead ; —
Look on the heart by sorrow broken ;
Look on the tears by sinners shed ;
And be thy feast *to us* the token,
That by thy grace our souls are fed ! "

CHAPTER XII.

HAVING EYES, SEE YE NOT? AND HAVING EARS, HEAR YE NOT? HOW IS IT THAT YE DO NOT UNDERSTAND?—MARK.

THERE is a perverseness in the spirit of unbelief which is truly wonderful. It is full of the tyranny of unhumbled pride, of unholy affections. Its power is alike and despotic over the most opposite classes of mental development. It can put in alliance against the truth the most cordial common enemies. When Christ is to be rejected, the superstitious ritualism of the Pharisee and the cold scepticism of the Sadducee can merge their private quarrels in a joint attempt to circumvent God's Son by seeking from him "a sign" out of the heavens. Allusion was made, in connection with Christ's temptation by Satan, to an opinion among the Jews, that their Messiah would be attended by some remarkable celestial phenomena. This idea is supposed by many to have had its origin in the description by the prophet Daniel of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.* Christ's miracles on the earth seem not to have satisfied these questioners of his Divine commission. Nor, with their cavilling disposition, would any portents in the firmament have accredited his claims. Mark now how the meekest and gentlest of beings when the sincere inquirer approached him, repelled the advances of these dissemblers; yet more in sorrow than in anger, — for Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit as he said to them, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a

* Bloomfield on Matt. 12: 38.

Perverseness of unbelief.Dulness of the disciples.

sign. Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given unto this generation."

An almost equally unaccountable dulness of comprehension still rested like a cloud upon the understandings even of Christ's twelve disciples. It was not indeed the same vicious pre-determination not to admit the fair deductions of the facts transpiring beneath their eyes. But the slowness of their progress in the knowledge of their Master's relations to God and to man, discovers how deeply buried their souls had been beneath the errors of a grovelling, most unspiritual age. This was an instance of their obtuseness;—having reached the other side of the lake, they found that they had omitted to bring with them a supply of bread. Christ, with the memory of the recent attack of the Jewish teachers upon him fresh in his mind, dropped in conversation a caution to them to beware of "the leaven" of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, that is, their misbelieving temper. The disciples could think of no bearing to this remark save their lack of forecast in not providing food for their wants. Jesus perceived their reasonings, and corrected their childish mistake with no small peremptoriness. "O ye of little faith, have ye so soon forgotten the five loaves of the five thousand—the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" "Have ye your heart yet hardened; having eyes, see ye not; and having ears, hear ye not: how is it that ye do not understand?" It was not until the end of this plainest of lectures, that they saw how that Christ "bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine" of his artful adversaries. It was a great advance in religious education which prepared these men for their subsequent office as teachers of the church for all after time. But their training was in the hands of a competent instructor, and

A progressive cure.

"Men as trees walking."

the material on which these labors were expended was worthy of the effort.

The restoring of vision to a blind man at Bethsaida, reported by the evangelist Mark, has one peculiarity connected with its operation which may detain us a moment. It was not an instantaneous, but a progressive cure. Having placed his hands upon the person afflicted, Christ asked him if he saw aught. A faint glimmer of light had broken in upon him, and he answered with a very natural simplicity, "I see men as trees walking." The objects of sight were strange and confused, gliding about in exaggerated shapes. A second touch perfected his recovery to the correct use of this sense. This account reminds us of the not infrequent results of successful surgical operations upon the blind, who, having no former experience of the size and distance of bodies, at first find themselves greatly perplexed in rightly adjusting these relations of the external world. So has an analogy been taken from this circumstance to the removal of spiritual blindness from the sinner. The grace which stimulates his soul's vision into activity does not at once clear away all shadows, does not immediately rectify all mistaken opinions. Regenerate persons often linger amidst views of Christian doctrine and duty, which might most accurately be likened to "men as trees walking." There are not a few crude and distorted sentiments, which loom up in this twilight as very imposing forms of solid substance. But another touch of Christ's enlightening power will reduce them to a much more truthful standard. That power we should habitually implore, that we may see clearly whatever God reveals to us, that we may be under no religious optical illusions. A disciple of Jesus, who has not got beyond this point of seeing men as trees walking, is not in a safe condition, either as regards his own personal progress in the way

A pregnant question.Rome's extravagant claims.

of life, or his influence as a director of the footsteps of others. This state we do not wonder to find in the recently converted ; but it ought not to encumber those who for years have had the opportunity of tuition in the school of Christ.

In the neighborhood of Cesarea Philippi, a Roman town near the highest sources of the Jordan, a conversation occurred between Christ and his apostles, which has given rise to one of the longest controversies, and to some of the most presumptuous abuses of power, which the history of Christianity has recorded. Our Lord put the question to his attendants, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" The answers were various ; they had heard among the people that he was supposed to be either John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or some other of the prophets. Christ then demanded of them their own belief as to himself. Peter, prompt to stand as the representative of his brethren, replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus rewarded this confession by pronouncing his blessing on this disciple ; affirmed the truth of the answer by declaring that it had been spoken by no revelation of "flesh and blood," no human discernment, but by the inspiration of his Father : and then added these signal words ; "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." *

Upon this text the Romish church has erected its imposing monopoly of the dignities and privileges of the kingdom of heaven, consigning all out-standers to the uncovenanted mercies of God. First, Peter is elevated to the headship of the

* Matt. 16: 18-19.

How she derives them.

Peter never at Rome.

apostles ; then, transferring his bishopric with but little if any reason in fact, to Rome, * it is contended that he bequeathed to that episcopal chair forever the same authority in spiritual affairs which Christ bestowed upon him. These powers, symbolized by the "keys," were of the most absolute kind — the control, say the Rhemish commentators, of doctrine, knowledge, judgment, true and false, supreme government, making and abrogating laws, canons, decrees, dispensing the goods of the church, both spiritual and temporal ; moreover it signifieth that men cannot come into heaven but by him, (so marvellous is Peter's jurisdiction ;) it embraceth also all kinds of punishment of offenders, spiritual and corporal — excommunications, anathemas, and other censures, and penalties or penances enjoined either at the confessional or in the exterior courts of the church, for punishment of crimes, but especially of heresy and rebellion against the church and the chief pastors thereof ; (a sin, by the way, than which Rome finds none more monstrous, even though both tables of the commands of Sinai were broken contemptuously in fragments ;) finally, this authority given to Peter excepteth nothing that is pardonable or punishable by Christ on earth, for he has committed his power to Peter, and Peter has committed it to his successors at Rome, whose sentences

* The learned author of the "Defensor Pacis," Marsilius of Padua, (A. D., 1330,) Rector of the University of Paris, and afterwards Physician and Theologian to the German Emperor, and an unimpeachable Churchman, says: "The Bishop of Rome ought rather to be called successor of the Apostle Paul, who for two years preached the Gospel at Rome, than the successor of Peter. It could not even be shown from the New Testament that Peter had ever been at Rome." Neander's Hist., vol. V., p. 82. There is no credible evidence of such residence. Very weighty names are fully against it, as F. Spanheim, Scaliger, Salmasius. It is merely a tradition. For its origin, v. Neander's "Planting and Training of the Christian Church," pp. 214-216, Phil. Ed., 1844.

Looseness and faleness of the Papal argument.

in binding and loosing whatsoever Christ will ratify in heaven. This is Romanism out of its own standards, and Romanism to-day, drawing necessarily with it all its old claims to usurp dominion, and to coerce, by persecution, submission the most unqualified. And Papal Europe, in this very year of grace, is a living, or if one prefer it, a dead and putrefying illustration of the whole anti-christian and anti-human system.

Now, however highly we may hold in estimation the character and position of this apostle, the immediately following context would seem to stamp as utterly extravagant the above recited exposition of our Saviour's words. Christ went on to say that he should soon be called to suffer a violent death at Jerusalem on account of his teachings and works. Peter, elated unduly, it may be, by the seeming preference of his Master, began to rebuke and positively to contradict his declaration. The rejoinder of Jesus was a severe one. "He turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan." Thou art an adversary, an evil counsellor to me; thy earthly views would obstruct the real purposes of my human mission, bound up inseparably with that sacrifice of life. We cannot but feel that the Romanists have put a weightier load of responsibility for time and eternity on such shoulders, than they were at all competent to sustain; especially as we remember yet other mournful victories of Satan over this good man. But waiving this — even if Christ did confer on Peter personally and exclusively these excessive prerogatives as alleged, there is not the slightest ground for the claim of their transmission to any line of successors. *This* is all a gratuitous interpreting into the text of an idea demanded only as a prop to a structure, otherwise fatally baseless, of ecclesiastical despotism. Again, there would seem to have been no propriety in making this declaration of Peter the occasion of conferring a primacy like this, when previously, the joint

 Peter's priority, what?

 Parity of the clergy.

confession of the whole company had been heartily rendered to Christ, of their belief in his Messiahship, his Sonship unto God.

I have already said, that Peter but gave utterance to the general faith and feeling of the twelve. The question of Jesus was to all of them, "Whom say ye that I am?" The reply was for all. The consequent response of Christ was not restrictive but indiscriminate in all things essential. The only priority enjoyed by Peter is reducible to this — that he was earliest summoned to follow Christ; commenced the public ministry of the Gospel to the Jews in his sermon at Pentacost, and also among the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, which labors founded the two great branches of organized Christianity in the first age. Aside from these appointments, Peter was no more than an equal among brethren. Upon him the church was no more built than upon them. Paul places it "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."* John says it has "twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."† Again, he records that Christ before his ascension bestowed upon all of these the authority without distinction, whatever that authority might embrace; "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."‡ And so we find it that in the first ecclesiastical council at Jerusalem, reported in the Acts of the Apostles, we look vainly for any assumption of higher powers by Peter over the rest. That council loosed the observance of the church from various requisitions of the Hebrew ritual; and it was in all respects a complete exhibition of the original, Christian doctrine of the parity of the clergy. Lords over an inferior grade of the ministry had then no existence, not even a type.

 * Eph. 2:20.

† Rev. 21:14.

‡ Jno. 20:23.

Christian Fathers: Basil. Augustine. Gregory.

That Peter is not the foundation of the church, in any such sense as here assumed, is manifest further from the fact that this position is expressly given to another. Beneath the "apostles and prophets," Paul puts "Jesus Christ himself" as the "chief corner-stone." Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And Peter, too, had a full perception of this same glorious truth. How would his honest piety have shrunk from being thus thrust into the place of that "elect, precious, corner-stone laid in Sion," Christ the Redeemer, on whom, as he himself assures us, whoso believeth shall not be confounded; who, though disallowed by the builders, is made the head of the corner.† This was clearly the interpretation of the early Christian Fathers. Basil, of the fourth century, writes; "Though Peter be a rock, he is not a rock as Christ is. For Christ is the true, unmovable rock of himself. Peter is unmovable by Christ the rock. For Jesus doth communicate and impart his dignities, not as voiding himself of them, but holding them to himself, bestoweth them also upon others. He is the light, and yet, you are the light; he is the priest, and yet he maketh priests; he is the rock, and he made a rock."‡ The evidence is ample that Peter's vicegerency was the after-thought of a later and corrupter period. Augustine had not conjectured it. His understanding of Christ's words he thus expresses. "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock which thou hast confessed, saying, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, I will build my church. I will build thee upon me, not me upon thee."§ Gregory, an early Bishop of Rome, admits that the rock on which the church is grounded is the *confession* of Peter || — the great

* 1 Cor. 3:11; also Matt. 23:8. § Confutation Rhem. Test., p. 64.

† 1 Peter 2:6-7.

|| Ib.

‡ Rhem. Test. Com. p. 49.

Hilary.

Neander.

Power of the "keys."

truth of Christ's mission and redemption. And Hilary, another orthodox Father, says, "The building of the church is upon this rock of confession. *This faith* is the foundation of the church, by this faith the gates of hell are of no power against it. This faith hath the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What this faith shall loose or bind on earth is bound and loosed in heaven." * Here is no intimation of any personal or official headship of Peter in the church. Least of all was this claim allowed to the early occupants of the episcopal chair at Rome. So late as the Nestorian schism in the fifth century, Neander affirms that the right of a supreme judicatory authority, according to the then constitution of the church, in nowise belonged to them.† Pope Leo, near this time, having set up some pretensions of this sort, was overruled by the general council of Chalcedon.‡ It required several ages more of deepening religious darkness and mental servitude to rivet this yoke upon the souls of men.

But having thus negatived the enormous demands of the Papacy as founded on this remark of Christ to Peter, it still remains a question of interest—what are the powers implied in this bestowment of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" on the church or her officers? This question will be answered in Protestant communions, with more or less of ecclesiastical assumption, as their historic development has placed them at a less or greater remove from the spirit of prelatical domination. Where the movement of reform has "stopped half way between Rome and Geneva" we shall find not a little of this leaven of unwarranted lordship over God's heritage. Perhaps even at Geneva itself there is not

* Confutation Rhem. Test., p. 64.

† Hist. of Church, II., p. 462. ‡ Conf. Rhem. Test., p. 65.

 What this is.

 Calvin on binding and loosing.

in practice an entire expurgation of it ; for the remark has justness in it that few things have more of fascination for ambitious tempers than the exercise of a large spiritual control. Guarding, however, as we would against all undue exaggerations of churchly authority, we conceive that there was a real investiture of power from Christ in these words to his disciples, which still has a legitimate home among his people. And we are well content to follow, in its exposition, the clear and judicious opinions of John Calvin, as set forth in the Fourth Book of his Institutes of the Christian Religion.*

Calvin understands this authority "to bind and loose" conferred through Peter on the twelve as related in Matthew,† to be identical with the commission given by Christ directly to the associated apostles "to remit and retain sins" as recorded by John.‡ And he finds their significancy in the doctrines and duties which are to be preached by an evangelical ministry. "For what is the sum of the Gospel, but that, being all slaves of sin and death, we are loosed and delivered by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ; and that those who never receive or acknowledge Christ as their Deliverer and Redeemer, are condemned and sentenced to eternal chains."§ The apostles had the assurance that they were preaching a religious faith which God would ratify in all its results of salvation or perdition. Their hearers had the most unequivocal testimony of this same fact. "Now, this testimony has been given to all ages, and remains unaltered, to certify and assure us all, that the word of the Gospel, by whomsoever it may happen to be preached, is the very sentence of God himself, promulgated from his heavenly tribunal, recorded in the book of life, ratified, confirmed and fixed in heaven. Thus

* Ch. XI. † 16:19. ‡ 20:28. § Institutes, vol. II., p. 396.

we see that the power of the keys, in these passages, is no other than the preaching of the Gospel ; and that, considered with regard to men, it is not so much authoritative as ministerial ; for strictly speaking, Christ has not given this power to men, but to his word, of which he has appointed men to be ministers,"* remitting what the Lord remits, retaining what the Lord retains.

But, in another connection, these words occur, where there is manifestly a different application intended. In Matthew eighteenth, in treating of offences among brethren, Christ says that those who " neglect to hear the church," to submit to its fraternal admonitions and discipline, are to be excluded from its fellowship ; and then immediately adds, " Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." " The church," remarks Calvin, " binds him whom it excommunicates ; not that it consigns him to perpetual ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and manners, and already warns him of his final condemnation, unless he repents. The church looses him whom it receives into its communion ; because it makes him, as it were, a partaker of the unity which it has in Christ Jesus.† And these judgments, so far as they conform to God's Word, are the promulgation of God's sentence which he will ratify in heaven. Dr. Christian Knapp observes, " that the church not only have the right, but are under obligation, to provide for the support of their doctrine and constitution, and to see to it that nothing is done contrary to them, is indeed unquestionable. And this is the foundation of Christian discipline, i.e., of all those public regulations and appointments by which the Christian doctrine and con-

* Institutes, II., p. 397.

† Institutes, II., p. 398.

Church-polity self-administering; free but orderly.

stitution, and a correspondent demeanor in the members of the church, are promoted and preserved. And this is according to Scripture. But respecting the manner in which Christian churches shall administer this discipline, no general rules are given. This must depend upon the situation and circumstances of each particular church."*

The ground of this institution of government in the church lies in the necessity of that first law of earth as well as heaven — order. A primary and vital condition of all associated life is subordination to some understood and equitable authority. To deny this is to proclaim anarchy, to enthrone discord and ruin in the seat of power. In bodies of sufficient intelligence and virtue, the associating members are themselves the natural, the best repository of jurisdiction. The platform of the Christian church is, consequently, a wholly self-administering polity, vested not in the clergy, but in the general brotherhood; a polity not of law-making powers, for Christ is the sole Legislator of his kingdom; but simply of declarative and executive force, under submission to the revealed word of God. This is the New Testament theory of ecclesiastical rule. It is binding as the voice of Christ. It alters not this conclusion that the church is fallible, and may not always decide as Christ would. This is only the unavoidable liability of an imperfect state of discernment. It must not be held as a valid cause of refusing to yield to the will of the community of believers. It is an entirely extravagant idea that the church needs no government, save that which every one may choose to exercise over himself. To recur to a suggestion already brought forward, in the language of the eminently discreet Leighton we say, "If any pretend that they have the spirit, and so turn away from the

* Theology, p. 479, Philad. Ed., 1845.

Leighton.

Christ's solitary attitude.

strait rule of Holy Scriptures, they have a spirit indeed, but it is a fanatical spirit, a spirit of delusion and giddiness ; but the spirit of God that leads his children in the way of truth, and is for that purpose sent them from heaven to guide them thither, squares their thoughts and ways to that rule whereof it is the author, and that word which was inspired by it and sanctifies them to obedience."

A period of two and a half years had now elapsed since Christ commenced his public career. Each of the former Passover feasts, embraced within that term, he had spent in Jerusalem ; but the third, which had just transpired, had been passed by him in the northern provinces of Palestine. He had entered upon the last year of his earthly sojourn. His redemptive labors were fast converging towards their great, appointed catastrophe. We hear him throwing out intimations to his disciples of the thickening perils before him, as if to prepare them for the coming crisis. But here also they were very slow to comprehend the meaning of their Master. They could not see the necessity or the reasonableness of this achievement of triumph to Christ's kingdom through its apparent total overthrow. "How is it that ye do not understand," was a question which he might often have put to them, who was leading them forward by daily advances towards the scenes of his own sacrifice. So far as an intelligent sympathy was concerned, Christ was a solitary traveller upon that sorrowful way. Not a friend did he appear to have, sufficiently matured in religious culture, to be made the confidant of this weightiest secret of his own bosom. It was a long way yet to "Emmaus." It is morally sublime to look upon a life thus divinely towering, in its high, its self-denying purposes, above all surrounding existences, — a mountain of strength, lifting its tranquil form far out of the region of inferior disturbances, where the soft light of heaven

Not understood by any.Premonitions and demands.

forever bathes its summit. We must realize to ourselves, with a good degree of vividness, these conditions of Christ's position among men, if we would comprehend the proper force of many of his words. Impressive as they are in their own naked verity simply, they are far more thrilling if we can but put ourselves in the circumstances in which he uttered them. For example, take this present scene. In immediate connection with the conversation which has formed the main topic of this chapter, Christ had given his hearers a plain announcement of his hastening martyrdom. He saw the whole mysterious train of sorrows which should line his path to Calvary. On their ears the prophecy fell as a harsh, repulsive sound of fear — the first low, distant, but startling roll of gathering thunders. Christ knew what a storm that note of warning portended. And now listen to these calm, clear utterances of duty — your duty, fellow man, and mine, as with his eye on all the future of peril and hardship involved in his service, he said,

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

“For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away.

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's and of the holy angels.” *

* Luke 9: 23-26.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND THIS VOICE WHICH CAME FROM HEAVEN WE HEARD, WHEN WE WERE WITH HIM IN THE HOLY MOUNT. — PETER.

CHRIST's ordinary appearance among his followers had been in the form literally of a servant. The scenes through which they had attended him had been, for the most part, scenes of humiliation, peril, reproach. Various and amazing had been, indeed, the mighty works which had attested to their understandings his supernatural power ; but they must often have mused with no small perplexity upon the strange dissimilarity between the stupendous results of his simple word of authority, and the unimposing presence of the actor ; there must have been to their minds an ideal of grandeur and glory befitting his more than regal endowments, which their Master was capable of assuming, that should immeasurably transcend all which thus far they had witnessed. Whatever may have been these imaginings, they were now about to be realized to a selected few, and through these to the less favored of their associates. Now for a brief season, the Divine was visibly to enrobe, to illumine, to glorify the human. Christ was to stand forth in something of that radiant magnificence, that celestial state, which he had with the Father before the world was ; and thus to stamp an impression of his Godlike being on the senses of the beholders, which should seal their confidence in his commission and their devotion to his person, as the Sent of God, to the latest time.

Some six days after the incidents narrated at Cesarea Philippi, Christ retired, with three of his disciples, to a mountain

A glimpse of Godhead.

Transfiguration.

Its locality.

in the neighborhood of that town, where occurred that remarkable event known in the history of his life as the Transfiguration. Tradition commonly has assigned the locality of this scene to Mount Tabor, an eminence of exceeding beauty which rises alone and proudly from the great plain of Esdraelon, not far from Nazareth. But more recent examination has made it very doubtful whether one of the peaks of the range of Hermon, much nearer the sea shore of Palestine, has not a stronger claim to this distinction. Tabor is rich in historic associations. From the days of the Hebrew Judges to those of Napoleon, the vast campaign around its base has been the battle ground of conflicting nations. It would be a pleasant thought, could geographic accuracy allow it, that over this landscape, so often ringing with the confused shoutings of the captains, and made hideous with the garments rolled in blood, heaven once unclosed her portals of holy, peaceful light ; God came down near to earth to pronounce a benediction on that Son of his love, whose mission among men was to give victory to the principles of universal right and brotherhood ; was to hush the clangor of arms, and sheathe every hostile sword.

But whatever was the precise locality of this "holy mount," its transactions were of the most marked impressiveness. While engaged in devotion on its summit, in company with Peter, John and James, the aspect of Christ's countenance was changed, was lighted up, as was his whole person, with a preternatural brightness ; at the same time there also appeared with him the forms of two of the most illustrious of the earlier prophets, Moses and Elijah, who conversed with the Redeemer concerning his approaching sacrifice at Jerusalem. At first, Christ's attendant disciples were overtaken by sleep, from which some conjecture that it was night when this scene occurred. But they were aroused in time

Its symbolic value and moral bearing.

to behold these visitors from the heavenly world, and to feel the sublime, the joyous influence of this interview. They saw Christ's glory and the two men that stood with him. They were conscious of a state of unprecedented exaltation and privilege; so much so that Peter proposed, with less distinctness of conception than fervency of emotion, that they should take up their permanent abode on that sacred spot. Withal, they were affected, as well we might expect, with a sense of awful fear — such as man must feel when he knows that God is nigh in majesty, such as the prophet felt when he drew near to the thick darkness where God was, such as we all shall feel when eternity opening to our entrance shall bring us personally into the presence of the Deity.

Indeed, we may regard this event partly as designed to foretoken the imposing state in which Christ shall meet as Judge, in the clouds of heaven, the separate and the collective subjects of his final adjudications. In "raiment white as the light," and with a "countenance shining as the sun," with regal pomp as the enthroned of sovereignty supreme, shall we all next see him to whom all judgment is committed. But the more immediate purpose of this display was seemingly to show to the apostles both the identity which existed between the religious dispensations represented by these older prophets and themselves, that is, the Mosaic and the Christian; and also, that the time was come to merge the more complicated formularies of the former in the simple and universal symbols of the latter. Here we have, in effect, a delegation from the Hebrew church holding council with the founders of the Gospel succession; conversing of that great fact in prospect, on which all valid hope for immortality, and all true church privilege has, from the beginning, been based; and most fully endorsing by their presence and sympathy the projected changes and expansions which were about to give

 Not an optical illusion.

 Heaven and earth.

augmented power and empire to the kingdom of God on earth.

This was for the benefit of the disciples. It was ordered, also, to familiarize them with the coming trials of their Master, and to give them something tangible, substantial, to fall back on, in memory, of his godlike greatness and glory, when they should hereafter see all earth and heaven too, apparently, turned against him. It was thus to them "a sign from heaven," which was denied to the demands of the gain-saying Jews, but was allowed to these friends of Jesus. And to have been this, it must have been a real occurrence, not a dream, a vision, an optical illusion. It was an objective presentation to their senses, not a subjective creation of their imaginations. Of course so unusual an incident as this could not expect to escape being resolved into an airy nothing of the mere fancy by a criticism which has turned the entire Bible, so far as its religious pretensions extend, into a fiction hardly founded on fact. But with this whole school of interpretation I have sufficiently declared my total want of agreement. We entered a world of wonders when we crossed the threshold of these Gospels ; and we blush not to write, as our motto, upon the whole progress of these investigations into the supernatural and divine ;

" Where *reason* fails with all her powers,
There *faith* looks upward and adores."

This interview was the expression of the profound interest of other worlds in the spiritual welfare of this. That mountain-top might stand as a monument of the oneness of holy sympathies and attachments and pursuits, in all parts of God's moral universe. What concerns God's kingdom on earth concerns it everywhere ; and everywhere awakens ab-

sorbing attention wherever God has true friends. Here, too, the family relationship of the indivisible church is figured, "the fellowship of all saints in this kingdom begun on earth and perfected in heaven. Moses, who represented the law; Elijah, who represented the prophets; and the three apostles, who were the pillars of the New Testament church, are here brought together, even in this world, to foretoken that all the saints of all these dispensations shall at last greet each other around a glorified Head and Redeemer, on the heavenly hills." * And we deem, moreover, the inference legitimate that "saints in heaven are able to keep up a continued acquaintance with the earth, sympathizing with those who are coming after them in all their trials and triumphs; and when they die, are perhaps the first to welcome them at the gate of the city." † If this truth came with exceeding comfort and encouragement to the human heart of Christ at that hour of prayer, and to the anxieties of his disciples, as now the shadows of the mount of crucifixion ‡ began to lengthen and deepen over their evening pathway; so may it come to us with a like influence, that amid our varied toils and trials and fears and faintnesses of heart, we are not unthought of, not uncared for, by those whose joys are never clouded, whose spiritual vigor is never depressed by sin; whose love to us has not lessened, has been rather immeasurably intensified by their transition to a world of perfect affections; and whose ability to befriend us, with a watchful care, may be far greater now than when they shared with us the infirmities of the flesh. Yes, life with all its shaded scenes shall have to us its moments, its mountain-heights, of transfigured light and pleasure, if by faith we will but draw closely around

* Harbaugh's Heavenly Recognition, pp. 136-7.

† Ib.

‡ "Calvary is a high mountain in the moral world."

Remembrances.

At the mountain's foot.

us the shining bands of glorified ones, once and still ours in Christian fellowship ; who yet know us in our mortal strifes and perils ; who, with an omnipresent Saviour, yet follow us with celestial ministrations, wherever we wander and wherever we rest.

This voice, which came from heaven, we heard, says the Apostle, when we were with him in the holy mount. It was that same benediction of the Eternal Father which before they had heard, charged with infinite affection for the Man of sorrows, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." How did God delight thus to endorse the progress of the Redeemer's work from stage to stage as it moved onward to its consummation. And in that blessing and that endorsement all of Christ's true adherents have a share. Peter felt this, far on towards the day of his own martyrdom for the Lord Jesus. That word from the skies rung in his soul like music, stirring him still to the conflict, nerving him for its extremest perils. So may the Church ever put on strength equal to her day out of this ever fresh assurance, that all which is undertaken or endured for Christ's dear sake is beloved of God, and in the time of God's recompense shall not lose its reward.

The little company upon the mount of the Transfiguration had remained there through the night. Descending on the morrow from that retirement, they encountered a scene strangely in contrast with the calm and holy pleasures which they had there enjoyed. A father had brought to the disciples, who remained below, a son afflicted from infancy with demoniacal visitations. It was an aggravated case. They had attempted its relief, but had failed. A large crowd had been drawn together, and among them many who were enjoying this defeat of the disciples with a malignant satisfaction. A spirited disputation was going on amidst this excited

Malignant triumph arrested.Christ indignant.

multitude, the scribes and sceptics calling in question, and probably denying the whole claim of Jesus to a religious leadership among the people ; when suddenly he came upon them, and brought the controversy to a speedy termination. His appearance "amazed" the beholders ; perhaps that glory which had shone around him on the "holy mount" was not yet all vanished ; but there were many who gladly ran to him and saluted him. And those abashed and hard-pressed disciples — did they not welcome joyfully his return, even as a ship's crew upon a dangerous sea breathes the more freely when some trusty pilot steps upon the vessel's deck ? Christ had come to their rescue, and to the rescue of his own cause from reproach. Small room for more debate was there here, when with commanding majesty Christ thus addressed the tormentor of this child ; "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." That word carried authority to separate even the soul from the body. It seemed to have actually done this ; for such was the convulsion of this afflicted youth, as this terrible adversary "rent him sore" and departed from him, that "he was as one dead." But Jesus revived his fainting energies, and he arose delivered from the power of his life-long oppressor.

This incident, however, was not suffered to pass without furnishing a severe reproof from our Lord to perhaps more than one of the parties implicated therein. There was a just indignation in the interrogatory with which he arrested the strife around this helpless victim of infernal malice ; "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ?" If it was intended for the cavilling multitude, it rebuked their unreasonable demand for yet more miraculous works to attest Christ's Messiahship. If for the thwarted disciples, it told them, as did Christ after-

Doubt begs denials.Parental solicitudes.

wards plainly, when they asked the cause of their unsuccessfulness, that had they put a full confidence in their Master's help, they could easily have wrought this, as they might still accomplish a yet greater triumph. Faith in God, as manifested in the Son of his love, was the grand necessity of them all. The want of this was sealing the ruin of those unbelieving thousands who followed Jesus but to reject him. The want of this crippled the efficiency of his disciples, and gave their enemies a temporary victory. That father could obtain no aid from Christ while he simply said, "*If* thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." "*If thou* canst believe," replied the Saviour, "all things are possible to him that believeth." The act of trust, of confidence, must precede the blessing. Just here is the secret of our most numerous defeats, our most to be lamented losses. How much richer in the true soul-wealth should we be, if we would but copy the example of that distressed, that pleading parent; "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'"

"The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,
The fettered tongue its chain may break;
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven;—
These baffle e'en the spells of heaven."

There are anxieties which Christian parents often feel in regard to their unconverted offspring, that lead them to the Saviour in prayer which is not devoid either of urgency or faith. Against all corrective influences, it may be, those children's evil natures seem to be gaining an alarming maturity; time but apparently carries them further and further from the kingdom of heaven; and the heart of a pious father

Prayer and fasting.

Paying taxes.

or mother is burdened with a heavy grief because of this ungodliness. Perhaps the question may arise, as such parents think on the condition of their impenitent households, why have we not succeeded in our endeavors to train for God a holy seed, within the promises of his everlasting covenant? Why has not this spirit of incorrigible rebellion been cast out? Possibly the inquiries of any who have thus been troubled may find their answer in those words which our Lord added in explanation of his disciples' failure on the above occasion; "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting;" by no other prayer save that, which in the intenseness of its importunity cares not to forego the ordinary pleasures, comforts of life; which is so engrossed in the pursuit of its purpose, that it forgets the wants of the flesh, keeps fast and vigil too, without a thought of irksomeness, in pressing its great plea at the mercy-seat. Such prayer has opened the gates of salvation to not a few of the straying. Christian, have you tried it for those whom you would love to see converted from pride and vanity and sin into the likeness of Christ?

The cautiousness of Christ to oppose no needless offence to the rulers or the usages of his nation, is strikingly exhibited in a transaction which now occurred. A tax or tribute was due, at this spring season of the year, to the support of the religious services of the temple. Being in the neighborhood of Capernaum, the collectors of this money came to Christ to receive it. As the spiritual Head and the divine Master of that people, Christ was conscious of his rightful exemption from that impost. But he preferred not to make good that claim. Though "free," he would readily yield this personal privilege, and place himself on the level of his countrymen in sustaining the institutions of the land. Yet to do it, he had to draw on a very unusual source. Desti-

The money and the fish.

Paulus.

Strauss.

tute of other supply, he despatched Peter to the lake, and from the mouth of the first fish which he took, he directed him to bring a piece of money adequate to this demand. The thing was done, and the debt cancelled.

Now, the preternaturalness of this affair I do not suppose to be, that Christ created this coin in the fish's mouth. We can believe, that in these waters frequented by fishermen, one of the finny tribe might easily have found and swallowed a Roman "stater," which I presume to have been the fact. The preternatural feature of the incident is simply this — that such a fish should actually have first sought the hook which was cast for him. If you say it might have happened thus accidentally; I admit the bare possibility, though obviously with millions of chances against it. And so improbable is this, that critics, who will not allow Christ's direct control of the coincidence, have resorted to the most inadmissible methods of explaining the record. Thus, the German Paulus will have it that Peter was sent to catch as many fish as might be sold to make up the tribute-money; and that he was not to open the fish's mouth to find a coin therein, but *to open his own mouth* to announce that he *had fish for sale*. And Strauss condemns the whole account as fabulous, because if the fish had the money in his mouth, he must have dropped it out when he opened his jaws to receive the hook. Better, I think decidedly, with this latter untrammelled commentator, to expunge outrightly the fact as a false entry, than with the former more numerous and less daring school, to attempt to save the text by some conjectural solution which has no shadow of authority beyond the fertile brain of its inventor.

Upon one of their recent walks, a conversation verging to a controversy had arisen among the disciples as to their respective importance and value to this new order of things

The least the greatest.A child's preaching.

which their Master was establishing. Possibly it grew out of the abortive effort of a part of their number to dispossess the lunatic youth, while the more favored three were with their Lord in the mount of Transfiguration. This dispute should be distinguished from a subsequent one, where, not their existing, personal merit, but their relative prospective rank in the kingdom of heaven, was the point of dissension.* Christ, in a most beautiful and memorable manner, repressed this unworthy ambition. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all." He is the greatest in true Christian worth and dignity, who is the greatest in true Christian humility. He is doing most service in my kingdom, who is willing to do anything, be it conspicuous or unobserved, which the wants of that kingdom require. He has the genuine nobleness of a regenerate nature, who can cheerfully take a servant's place, "a servant of all," in this holy cause. Then taking a child, Christ set him in the midst of them, and said, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me." This modest, childlike simplicity is a fair symbol of the character which grace would create in the soul. Its unassuming, self-distrustful feelings are the entire opposite of those which give birth to angry contentions for superior notice and applause among men. He who least magnifies his own merits, is likely to be most exalted of God. Are we anxious to know what shall be estimated as most commendable, most valuable service in the kingdom of heaven? Not then that which strikes the most loudly on the public ear, which figures the most showily on the lists of general philanthropy. He who, in a spirit of Christ-like tenderness, gives the hand of fellowship, the embrace of love, to one of Christ's little ones, — who, for the sake of

* Cf. Neander's Life of Christ, p. 287.

Stooping to rise.

Jesus, gives a cup of cold water to a fellow man, does this for One who is greater than man, who measures our acts by the temper of soul which moves them much more than by the stir they make among the bystanders. Let us endeavor to learn this lesson experimentally, thoroughly. To be like our Lord, is to combine the firm endurance of the veteran soldier with the gentleness, the lovely, unassuming ingenuousness of childhood, when childhood is what it should be. Here we stoop to rise. To serve our Lord most effectively, most acceptably, is to despise no labor because it is lowly, to neglect none because it is unpopular, to undervalue nothing where is or may be stamped an impression of Christ's spirit and life. How will his judgment-seat reverse our estimates of greatness and of goodness !

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME SAID, HE IS A GOOD MAN; OTHERS SAID, NAY; BUT HE DECEIVETH
THE PEOPLE. THE OFFICERS ANSWERED, NEVER MAN SPAKE
LIKE THIS MAN. — JOHN.

Now that time has taken this dispute, concerning Christ's personal moral integrity, out from the influence of contemporary prejudice and passion, the world has by acclamation decided it in the affirmative; for whatever may be thought of his claims as God, no one scarcely presumes to deny his transcendent goodness as a man. This verdict stands securely upon the entire harmony of his faultless life with his unrivalled precepts of virtue and piety. "Never man spake like this man," is a sentiment which has had ten thousand echoes from foes as well as friends; which has compelled assent from the most reluctant; which, even in this age of scepticism, holds for Christianity a position of impregnable strength in the honest convictions of the millions. And what he spake, he felt, he practised. His inner and his outer life were in perfect accord. Hence, even the devil, when he came, found nothing against him. Has any one else, in truth, keen as may have been the inquest?

A marked infirmity of human nature is its readiness to give and to take offence. The management of this tendency is a chief difficulty in the maintenance of a kind, social and Christian intercourse. It was a practical question among the disciples. Peter came with it to Christ; "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" It is to be noted here, that the Jewish teachers had derived the maxim, from a narrow and selfish

Forgiveness of injury.Seventy-times seven.

construction of certain texts of their Scriptures,* that the duty of forgiveness could not be required beyond at most a third or fourth offence. Peter seemed disposed to give a considerably freer scope than this to the sway of forbearance, even till seven, or many times. But Christ's idea of the just limits of a forgiving temper far overshot that of his follower and friend. Never did a more godlike sentence fall even from his lips, than when he answered the interrogatory of Peter; "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven." This was the honest utterance of a heart which had bathed itself from eternity in heaven's holiest fountains of love; it was the calm expression of a principle of action which once again found language for itself, when amid the anguish of the cross it prayed for a crowd of infuriate murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Whether to overcome a sentiment of surprise and incredulity which his reply may have excited in his hearers, or to fasten this lesson more firmly in their memories, Christ immediately accompanied it with one of his most graphic parables. So far as this matter is involved, the "kingdom of heaven" — its true law of intercourse — is likened to a king who brings before him the high officers of his realm to review and audit their accounts. Here approaches an oriental satrap, not willingly but reluctantly, who, in the management of his imperial domain, is a defaulter for millions. But his piteous prayer, "Lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all," moves his injured sovereign to compassion, and the doom of enslavement against him, his wife and children, for the fraudulent debt, is revoked. The

* As, Job 33: 23-30, margin, "oftentimes;" Heb: "twice and thrice;" and Amos 1: 8, and 2: 6.

The cruel creditor.Meaning of this parable.

“seventy times seven” long-suffering has prevailed over a sudden but just indignation. Alas! that it should not have wrought its own resemblance in its greatly befriended subject. This man goes out thus liberated, and finding a fellow servant who owes him a paltry hundred pence, takes him by the throat, and demanding of him, “Pay me that thou owest,” because this is not forthcoming, he casts him, in spite of prayers and promises, into prison till he should satisfy the claim. All this being reported to the monarch, he passes judgment thus on the offender; “O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desirest me; shouldst thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?” Then did his lord take back his pardon, and give him over to justice, stern and eternal. “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye *from your hearts* forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

Now, it is to be observed that this parable is an illustration not of the plan of a sinner’s salvation, but simply of the right rule of human forbearance in regard to injuries. Therefore it does *not* teach that when God has forgiven a penitent transgressor, he ever cancels that pardon and gives him over to final torments. If it teaches this, then it just as fairly teaches that a sinner is pardoned on his own suit only for mercy, without any intervention of a Mediator. But it goes not into these questions at all. It neither denies Christ’s atonement, nor the perseverance of the saints. It tells us that God will not show us clemency unless we show it to others. It is but a comment on the petition, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It condemns the disposition which hurls back scorn and hate and retaliation for injuries and insults; which would push an enemy to the wall, and transfix him there with the javelin of

A Persian proverb.

Wesley.

Church-discipline.

revenge. The Persians have a proverb which most delicately and truthfully expresses just the sentiment of Christ on this difficult, dangerous subject ; Sir William Jones has given it to us in an English dress :

“ The sandal tree perfumes, when riven,
The axe that laid it low ;
Let man, who hopes to be forgiven,
Forgive and bless his foe.”

It is reported of John Wesley, that being at sea with a governor of one of our early colonies, he found his excellency exceedingly enraged at a servant for stealing and using a case of very choice wines. “ I will be revenged on him,” exclaimed the angry governor, “ for I never forgive.” “ Then I hope, sir,” said Wesley, looking calmly at him, “ I hope, sir, you never sin.” The governor was cooled and corrected by this most Christian rebuke, and restored his servant to his confidence.*

Nor is this inconsistent with the directions immediately preceding concerning the management of offences against the Church.† If its public position and interests forbid the same breadth of forbearance which is required in the private relations of life ; if, neglecting to hear the church, an offender must finally be separated unforgiven from its fellowship, the whole process of discipline prescribed by Christ is marked by the utmost tenderness of love, of patience ; the dividing stroke is the mercy which severs a dead limb from the living body, lest disease shall also fatally invade that which now is sound and healthful.. We cannot think that Jesus Christ would ever exclude an unworthy member from the communion of his people, were he on earth among us, in any other spirit

* Arvine.

† v. Chap. XII.

The seventy disciples.Unconverted kindred.

than that in which he wept over those who refused to be gathered by him to his fold of salvation, his kingdom of glory. The church, while for Christ's honor it may not hold back the excising blow, may inflict it with as sincere and heart-felt a compassion for the delinquent, as a right-minded Christian will pity and pardon a personal indignity cast upon himself.

A spirit that from the heart spontaneously pardons an offence, is one of the surest evidences of a regenerate life. Nature teaches us not to say,

"Jesu, do thou my foes forgive!
He who would learn that prayer, must live
Under the holy cross."

After an absence from Jerusalem of nearly a year and a half, which he had spent in the north of Palestine, we find our Lord once more turning his attention towards Judea and its metropolis. Before commencing his journey southward, however, he selected seventy persons from among the best prepared of his followers, and sent them abroad with a commission to teach, and to work miracles, in terms very like the former which he had given to the twelve. The month of October had now arrived, and with it the period for celebrating the annual feast of Tabernacles. The mass of pilgrims to this festival had already departed, among them Christ's brothers — younger children of his own parents probably; though some say the sons of Joseph by an earlier marriage. We cannot positively decide this; what is of more interest is the remark dropped incidentally by John, that even these near kinsmen did not as yet believe on him. This is a strange glimpse unveiled to us of the strength of human pride and perverseness; stranger much than what sometimes, yes, often now astonishes us, as we see the children,

Christ knew this trial.Feast of Tabernacles.

brothers, husbands, of the most consistently and attractively pious still numbered among the wicked. If it almost staggers our faith in God's promises that impenitency should thus walk hand in hand with piety, we may recollect that it found a shelter under the same paternal roof with Jesus. If that unbelief seems resolved never to yield to truth and duty, let it sustain our patience and our hope a little longer, that Christ had this self-same trial to endure; that he personally knows how his people feel, as they look upon the best-beloved of their hearts unreconciled to God; and that he can and will impart the especial grace which this condition of his friends on earth requires. When you carry this complaint to the Intercessor's throne, Christian, burthened with the ungodliness of an irreligious, a sin-loving relative, for whose life you would freely give your own, think that his ear, his heart is open to your petition, with the truest sympathy, whose own brothers, almost up to the eve of his last sorrows, had not reposed in him their trust, their devotion, as their Redeemer.* He has not forgotten what that sigh, that tear of your distress means. Leave this burden at his feet. He will remove it, or help you to bear it.

But when the ceremonies of this feast were in full progress, Christ, who had at first declined going thither, presented himself unexpectedly at Jerusalem. Already had he been eagerly looked for both by friends and foes; but his delay and the uncertainty attending his movements had prevented any settled plan for his arrest or injury, among his enemies. Instantly every interest of those assembled thousands was concentrated upon his person. He had been among them in their homes far away amidst the valleys and mountains of Samaria and Galilee; and they were no

* v. Jno. 7: 5, 7.

Commotion in Jerusalem.Calmness and courage.

strangers to his mighty works. He had been in the streets and the temple of Jerusalem too in former days ; and the traces of his godlike progress were yet fresh in the memories of this people. Again, the man who, as never a prophet of the Lord before, had thrilled the nation from extremity to extremity, was amongst them, lifting his calm, clear voice in defence of himself, his Father, his doctrines, his deeds, his mission as a Saviour of the guilty and the lost. Crowds clustered about him of every hue of feeling. It was fully understood that his life was sought by his vindictive opposers. Some of the multitude said, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill ? But lo ! he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ ?" And then, the thought of his low origin started up once more, and these same half-convinced questioners joined in the clamor against him. But not a few believed on him and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done ?"

Day after day, amidst all this commotion, Christ continued his addresses to the people in defiance of the threats and plottings of the rulers. The feast had reached its last great ceremonial. As the sacred water of Siloam was poured out by the priests in presence of the whole vast concourse, Jesus seized the moment and the symbol so significant, and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink !" The summons was not lost upon all. Some consciences were touched, some souls renewed among the listeners. The populace was divided, was agitated with conflicting passions, like a great forest when the winds are out in strength. The heads of the city had again lost control of the masses. Christ had once more laid his grasp on these riotous elements, and steadily held them at bay. Officers despatched to arrest him came back to their employers, and to the question, "Why have

Nicodemus again.A subtle snare.

ye not brought him?" confessed his power over their steel-clad minds by the reply, "Never man spake like this man." It was in vain as yet to attempt publicly to sacrifice Christ. Now again, therefore, the Sanhedrim betook themselves to their secret councils against him, to put together some indictment that would hold him capitally condemned under their national code. But here even there was a voice which ventured to interpose a plea for the innocent. Nicodemus, he who came to Jesus by night — and these years which had elapsed since that timid visit, had done much in strengthening his courage, we trust also in stimulating his love for this persecuted man — Nicodemus said, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" What was the response of these dignified masters in Israel to this most sensible and manly and universally binding principle of jurisprudence? Hear it — a taunt which would have disgraced the veriest rabble of an uncivilized land; but so low can passion sink both learning and venerable age: "They answered and said unto him, art thou also of Galilee? Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Verily it was time for every man to go to his own house, if so be that reason might regain her sway over prejudice and hate.

After seeking a night's repose in the Mount of Olives, perhaps with the family of Bethany two miles distant, Christ was early at the temple, surrounded by the still excited populace. Meantime his persevering adversaries had prepared a most subtle snare to entrap him. They had arrested a woman for violating the command against adultery, and they brought the criminal before him for judgment. Reminding him that the Mosaic law prescribed the punishment of death by stoning for this offence, they asked him, "but what sayest thou?" Now, the point of their expected triumph over him lay thus

The woman in adultery.Pretended zeal for virtue.

undoubtedly in their anticipations ; they were attempting to gain his interference in passing sentence on a case which belonged to the regular tribunals. Should he gratify their wish by affirming the penalty of the statute-book, and they relied on the tone of his pure moral feeling that he would, then they could at once accuse him of meddling with the concerns of the government, of usurping the seat of civil justice. But if, watchful on that hand, he should refuse to judge her thus, then they would fasten on him a connivance at gross immorality, they would sound the alarm through all the city, that virtue was in danger. The public should prize and be thankful for every sincere lover and protector of good morals. We need more of them. But when a rogue, with his neighbor's purse in his own pocket, cries, " Stop thief ! " when they whose own reputation is heavily clouded at the very point in question, set up an especial guardianship over others, and upon appearances which in no wise trench on propriety, gravely warn the community that its dearest rights are invaded, a frown of indignation, severe and settled, should tell such hypocrisy that it can neither escape the detection or the reprobation of upright minds. Would that all, who may find themselves thus beset, had the wisdom of Jesus, as in unruffled silence he answered nothing to his questioners, but stooped down and with his finger wrote upon the ground, as though he heard them not. What a blessing were it sometimes to be deaf ! But they were not thus to lose their game so cunningly enclosed. " So when they continued asking him " — mark now the action of Christ so full of collected calmness, the very personification of dignified self-repose, and the words, so instinct with equity, discretion, kind-heartedness — " he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground."

Malice again foiled.Christ and the woman.

Where now was their easy victory? When he looked again about him, they were gone whose consciences, not yet wholly dead, had told every one of them from the oldest to the youngest, *thou* canst not cast that first stone, for thou art a sinner, perhaps this very kind of a sinner, too. What a set of men to be thus hunting as a felon the immaculate Christ! He saw himself alone with the erring woman. What must have been her changing feelings during this singular interview? Let us imagine, in charity, that this was no case of hardened, habitual crime; that in an unguarded moment one had fallen, around whose life hitherto youth and loveliness and purity had shed their fairest gifts; that already the sharp iron of a quick and deep repentance had entered her awakened soul; that cast down in genuine sorrow she had awaited in self-admitted guiltiness her righteous doom. Hardly less than all this can we reconcile with Christ's treatment of her, as beholding her, he said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee," pronounced sentence on thee? "She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn," adjudge thee to death; "go and sin no more."

" And she

Arose, and went her way in sadness; and
The grace of Him, to whom the power is given
To pardon sins, sank down into her soul,
Like gentle dew upon the drooping herb,
That under that good influence blooms again,
And sends its odors heavenward.

And perchance

There was great joy above, in those bright hosts
Who more rejoice o'er one, that was a slave
To sin, and hath repented, than o'er ten,
So just that they have nothing to repent."

A delicate matter often badly mismanaged.

Of course, I need not vindicate this conduct of Christ from any suspicion of evil. On the contrary, it was conduct that towered magnanimously above the common standard of human, and I may say of Christian judgment and action in this and many similar matters. I am fully conscious of the difficulty of the ground to which this remark leads me ; but notwithstanding the danger of being misunderstood, I may not leave this topic without a further suggestion or two of much practical moment, which lie immediately in my path. We have no controversy concerning the worth, the sacredness of social and domestic purity. It is this its very inestimable price which gives so much importance to our treatment of its violation. The chastity of society gains no protection or encouragement from that prying, malicious curiosity, which is ever on the alert to espy the signals of invasion upon the rights of virtue ; to whisper defamation upon the faintest even of surmises. It is an instructive fact that localities, large or smaller, most noted for this spirit, are often remarkably remote from a general high tone of feeling and behavior on this subject. It is a still greater misfortune that society deals with offences of this description in a temper of such indiscriminate harshness. Let me not be misapprehended. This, as all other immoralities, should meet with the settled, immovable, yet just disapprobation of the good. Where the crime is aggravated by an age and an experience which should have given its possessors a firm self-mastery, by a protracted career of artful concealments of guilt, and by but very dubious marks of penitence when detected, a community can hardly express its sense of wounded honor and virtue too sternly. Yet just here its displeasure will very possibly fall most lightly, voicelessly, while if some passion-gust of temptation shall sweep triumphantly but for once over a young and artless and unpractised heart, its decree of banishment

How Christianity should treat this subject.

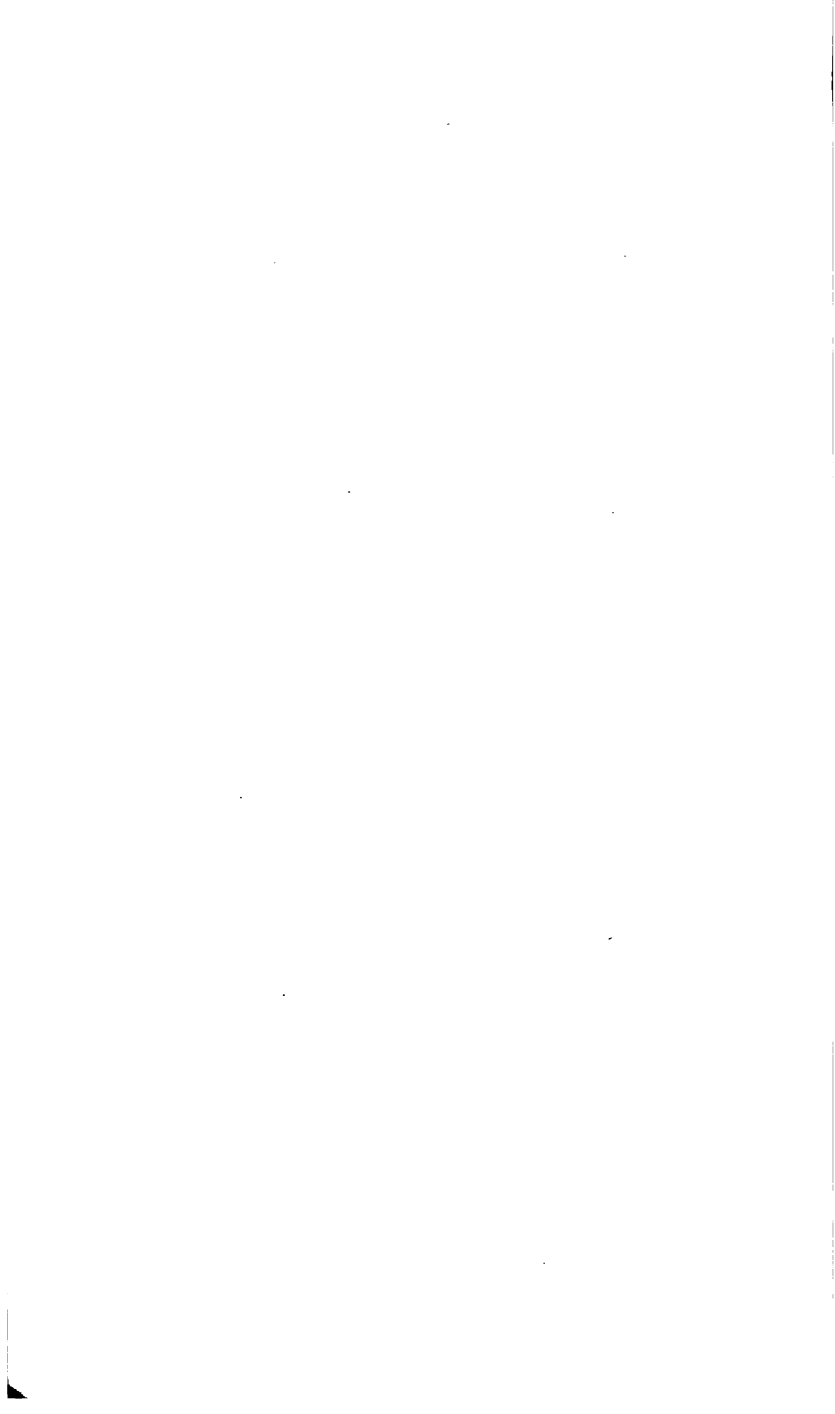
from the sympathies, and abandonment to the curses of nine-tenths of the community is as instantaneous as the flash and the roll of the electric storm. And that sex, which commonly is the most innocent and the most injured, is the one to be scathed most mercilessly by this popular tempest of indignation; while the crafty, genteel, unabashed seducer shall still find free entree to the homes, the civilities, the lavish attentions of parents, and their daughters, who would not spare aught save a glance of insufferable scorn to the crushed, the grief-stricken victims of this finished villainy. Hence our cities are annually supplied with thousands from our country towns and villages, to replenish the ranks of these quickly completed wrecks of vicious indulgence there, thousands who might have been saved to a regenerate life, to the world and Christ and heaven, if their first lapse from purity, instead of encountering this stone-like hardness of reprobation from Christians as well as others, had found some such holy and healing love as that fallen woman found, in a bitter hour of calm reflection, to whom Jesus said, Neither do I *thus* condemn thee; go and sin no more.

“Speak gently of our sister’s fall;—
Who knows but gentle love
May win her, at our patient call,
The better way to prove.”

From Christ we must learn one thing—an elevation, a sincerity of piety of such conscious truth and clear manifestation, that we shall not feel it to be necessary to brace up our professions, to protect our characters by any forced, artificial exaggerations of our virtuous zeal; lest in our open, Christian charity, yea justness of conduct, some one should perchance suspect *us* of covert wickedness. How utterly

Need of moral independence.

free from all these fears for his own reputation was our Master, in his noble, untrammelled equity and compassion on this difficult occasion. Had we more of Christ's religion we might have more of his magnanimity; we might more often follow fearlessly our own convictions of duty, instead of the factitious, unrighteous adjudgments of popular opinion; we might learn to show pity, to extend help to sinful and wretched humanity where it is most needed, not simply where, by the consent of others, it is pronounced to be safe and prudent.



CHAPTER XV.

THEN SAID THE JEWS UNTO HIM, NOW WE KNOW THAT THOU HAST A
DEVIL. — JOHN.

WHY this rude, this angry rebuff? Had Christ spoken or done aught which savored of the infernal world? Rather is this an instance of the transfer of one's own evil feelings to an opponent; or, in common phrase, the judging of another by one's self. It was simply a pungent, personal application of truth to their moral convictions by Christ, which had again excited the passions of his enemies against him. "I am the light of the world (said Jesus); he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." If the Jews could not comprehend, would not receive this announcement, to which moreover the Almighty Father had added the fullest testimonials, it was because of the radical opposition of their natures to his spirit and claims. They knew not him nor his Father. Whither he was going they could not come. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I AM — ye shall die in your sins." From this enslavement there was but one escape; his word, confided in and followed, would make them free by the power of truth. But, were they not already *free*? They, the children of chosen Abraham, *they* were never in bondage to any man! A singular forgetfulness of their national history, a singular oblivion of their existing political condition, was this. But their pride was on fire now, and they did not feel the fetters

Children of the devil.

An explosion of anger.

which bound them. However, Christ did not refer to this thralldom. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." This was their miserable servitude. Children of Abraham though they were, they had another spiritual parentage, which Christ did not hesitate to charge upon them ; though to do so, he had to speak a name which in these ages can hardly be tolerated by "ears polite." If they were religiously the offspring of Abraham, they would not seek to kill one who had told them only the truth. If, as they claimed, they really loved God, they would also have loved him who came from God. No : they had committed a very common mistake ; God was not their Father, they did not love him. "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."

It must be granted that Christ's address was of the most searching description. "He that is of God heareth God's words." Perhaps they would not have demurred to this as an abstract proposition. But Christ did not deal much in abstractions. He did not leave these to make their own way against the mail-clad hearts of his countrymen. He sharpened the arrow, and then, with a delicate aim, planted it in the conscience to the very feather. "He that is of God, heareth God's words ; ye *therefore* hear them not, because ye are not of God." One more word only was wanted to explode the pent-up resentment of Christ's hearers. It came in far from a conciliatory shape. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." This was more than enough to fire the whole train. "Now we know that thou hast a devil." Abraham and the proph-

Christ's past eternity and true divinity.

ets, good men and beloved of God, were dead ; how was this to be reconciled with Christ's pretensions as just unfolded ? Was he greater than these ? The controversy, we perceive, was taking a most important direction. " Whom makest thou thyself ? " asked the angered Jews. " Your father Abraham (replied Jesus) rejoiced to see * my day ; and he saw it and was glad ; " — how different his feelings from theirs, in prospect of Messiah's advent ! They understood Christ's remark in its most literal sense, and retorted, " Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham ? " Christ did not shrink from this challenge. With the utmost directness, solemnity, self-collectedness, he answered, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am," a phrase which, after a multitude of the profoundest Biblical critics, we hold to have no adequate grammatical or logical meaning save the affirmation of " an eternal duration, an attribute of the Godhead alone." So, as has often been observed, the Jews manifestly understood it, or they would not have attempted to stone him for blasphemy. Thus, when they a short time after † made a similar assault upon him for saying, " I and my Father are one," they defended their conduct on this express ground ; " for a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy ; and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." If Christ did not teach the doctrine of his own inherent divinity, these learned and quick-sighted Jews strangely misconceived his purpose and misinterpreted his language.

This discourse of Christ furnishes a good occasion for a suggestion in regard to a matter which all do not apparently understand. Earnestness in the pulpit is sometimes misconstrued into a kind of irritation in the preacher verging almost

* Earnestly longed to see. — Bloomfield.

† Jno. 10: 30, seq.

The pulpit in earnest.

Hopkins.

Chalmers.

into anger. Close and pointed statements of truth, and appeals to conscience uttered in stirring tones and with excited sensibilities, are set down to the account of a severe, a condemnatory temper, sadly deficient in the softening influences of human sympathy and of Christian charity. So would that address of Jesus be now received in very many of our congregations — yet most unjustly. The recent biographer of Dr. Samuel Hopkins takes notice of this fact in connection with that most benevolent of men ; “Strangers often supposed his pertinence to be impertinence, and mistook the decisive tones of his voice for signs of unwarranted passion.” * Dr. Chalmers, himself one of the most plain-spoken and impassioned of preachers, in a funeral sermon of an eminent contemporary, alludes to the same topic. “Under an urgent sense of rectitude, he delivered himself with vigor and with vehemence in behalf of what he deemed to be its cause — but I would have you to discriminate between the vehemence of passion and the vehemence of sentiment, which, like though they be in outward expression, are wholly different and dissimilar themselves.” And in another place, this noble example of a Christian minister has a thought, which I cite as worthy of a thorough comprehension and a careful remembrance. “The language of strong conviction is often mistaken by hearers for the language of irritation ; and the utterance of a mind actuated by an urgent feeling of the truth and importance of its argument, is at times confounded with the utterance of a mind actuated by hostility not against the adverse doctrine, but against the adversary that holds it. There must thus be an utter misinterpretation * * * by those who know not how possible it is to reconcile firmness in public with the most perfect mildness and amiability in pri-

* Park's Memoir of Hopkins, Works I., 104, Boston Ed., 1852.

Blind from birth.

Relation of sin and suffering.

vate life." * These qualities were never more fully exhibited than in Jesus Christ. They should be found in all his servants. Nor will any one find difficulty in harmonizing their existence in the same bosom, who knows experimentally the workings of a genuine love to Christ and human souls.

In the midst of his increasing personal perils, Christ did not forget the miserable. Whilst the whole city was in uproar about him, he met a man blind from his birth, a common beggar, it would seem, in Jerusalem, and cured him. If, by the machinations of his foes, his day of active mercy was soon to close in night, nevertheless while the day lasted, he must work the works of Him that sent him. A question was started by the disciples over this case of physical infirmity, Christ's answer to which gives us a glimpse of important truth. They asked him whether his blindness was the consequence, as a punishment, of his own sins or his parents' ? This certainly betrays a very defective ethical understanding. He could hardly have been afflicted thus, as a penalty adjudged for sins committed by others before his existence. And being thus afflicted from his birth, it could not have been for guilt by himself contracted. All human suffering has a connection with the general fallen condition of our race. But it is not competent for us to trace minutely here the specific relations of effects and causes. Why, in the arrangements of providence, one should be dealt with so much more severely than others, is not because he individually is so much the more wicked ; † it is to be resolved into an act of God's sovereignty ; or as Christ here expressed it, " that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Evil

* Chalmers' Life by Hanna, III., pp. 800, 521.

† Compare Luke 18: 1-4.

Use of evil.

Case on trial.

Excommunication.

is inherently evil — it is not to be called in itself good ; yet all evil may by God's grace and our own co-operation be productive of good. In this instance, the blindness of this Jew brought him into a relation to Christ, and to a personal interest in Christ's kingdom, which otherwise he might never have enjoyed. God's works were gloriously illustrated through him to others, to a world, and in him experimentally, as the compassion of Jesus touched him, and he " came seeing."

We must mark a few characteristics of this incident. The cure itself was like others already described. The sequel, however, was peculiar. The case obtaining quick notoriety, for the man from his youth had been known throughout the city, the rulers at once commenced an investigation of its merits. The man was examined and re-examined, and he told the simple fact. His parents testified positively to his blindness from his birth, but declined any explanation of his restoration to sight. *He* could only on this point express at first a conviction that his benefactor was a prophet, a religious teacher like the early guides of their nation. But the Pharisees would have it that Christ was a sinner, and therefore, if he had opened this man's eyes, it must have been by aid from infernal powers ; and all this, because he had done this good deed on the Sabbath-day. The debate was waxing hot, for the eyes of this man's spirit were unclosing to see distinctly that he who had healed him by a word was not only not a sinner, but must have been sent from God. And boldly did he confess his dawning faith ; with no small measure of keen rebuke, moreover, at the pre-determined obstinacy and malice of his opponents. His short but conclusive argument, that Christ's miracle attested his divine claims, they could only answer with the bigot's refutation — they cast him out of the synagogue.

God manifest.

Faith.

Hirelings.

Christ, however, had not cast him out. He found him, and revealed himself to the as yet but imperfectly instructed inquirer more fully as the Son of God — Messiah ; and in the gushing ardor of faith and love, the renewed spirit of that outcast from the earthly temple cried out, " Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him." God to him was manifest in flesh. How solemnly impressive, how perfectly transparent the words with which Jesus brought this scene to an application. " For judgment I am come into this world ; that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind." This work of heavenly power and pity, which had given both bodily and spiritual vision to a despised beggar, had but sealed the inner senses of these proud, rebellious Jewish rulers and their accomplices to a yet profounder, a fatal opacity.

Christ and these men were at the remotest distance from each other in everything pertaining to religious character and influence. He was the " door of the sheep," he was the " good shepherd," ready to lay down his life for his flock. And here another poor straying one had found that door, had come and laid himself down in love and security at that shepherd's feet. They were, with all their sacred pretensions, but " thieves," " hirelings," " robbers," forsaking their charge when in trouble, utterly destitute of all nourishment wherewith to satisfy the wants of a soul awaking to a consciousness of its moral nature, its religious necessities. They were the false claimants of an office, whose right spirit they knew nothing of. They professed to practice a benevolence with which they had no genuine sympathy.

Whether designed or not, this broad contrast runs through another of Christ's exhibitions of truth, the occasion of which was a question put to him by a certain lawyer, " What shall I do to inherit eternal life ? " Christ referred him to the

My neighbor.

Good Samaritan.

A problem.

requirements of the law ; and the spirit of these he seemed to have comprehended, for he answered Christ's question of its claims, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself." This was enough to have satisfied his own inquiry. Evidently he felt that he was a defaulter under this strict rule, and to make a retreat, propounded another question, "Who is my neighbor?" Christ responded by sketching the familiar and most beautiful parable of the "Good Samaritan." I hardly need recite its well-known incidents. In the wilderness between Jerusalem and Jericho, where a Roman fort was needed to protect travellers from bandits, a Jew had fallen into their hands, whose wounded and half-dead condition a priest had passed without crossing the road to examine ; a Levite also had looked at with a little more attention, yet had done nothing to relieve ; but a Samaritan had dismounted, had dressed the sufferer's wounds, had brought him away to a place of comfort, had made every provision for the stranger's wants. Now the neighbor of him who fell among thieves, was the man who showed mercy to him. So the lawyer confessed. And Christ's rejoinder, "Go and do thou likewise," teaches us that every fellow-being is our neighbor to whom, in the ordering of providence, we have opportunity of doing an act of compassion, of good-will, be he a blind beggar or whatsoever other outcast from hope.

The world has most lavishly eulogized this picture of disinterested kindness ; has multiplied in every form its features as the symbol of human compassion stooping to the succor of misfortune. It must, however, be confessed that this deed of mercy has been made to do duty as the representative of much, but slightly if at all penetrated with its divine spirit. What is true benevolence is a problem still very difficult to be solved to the satisfaction of the community.

Use of this parable.

Sentimental philanthropy.

Where it abides is another about as difficult ; but some have ascertained where it does *not* ; for in their not over charitable judgment, this priest and Levite have left the mantle of their heartless selfishness as a legacy to about the entire *clerical* profession, the main drift of whose study, if we are to believe much noisy, platform oratory, has been for some eighteen hundred years, to give as wide a berth as possible to the woes and the wants of society, passing quite upon " the other side." The exceeding prominency which *this* scriptural reference is honored with by many who would seem to have no great respect for *much else* which even Jesus spake, must be my apology for the above allusion. But who is the Good Samaritan ?

Not the mere sentimental dreamer over human miseries — with whatsoever tenderness of sympathetic woe the heart is moved at the tale of bitter sorrow. This softness of feeling is natural to some ; by others it is cultivated in the contemplation of real, but more commonly of fictitious distress. It luxuriates its morbid sensibility upon scenes of suffering far distant from its reach, or the creation simply of the novelist's excited imagination. Wretchedness at its own door, haggard and pining and pleading for relief, is disagreeably vulgar and repulsive to its taste. Men, women and children may starve in cellars and garrets within one half hour's walk of the cushioned lounge, where the heart of this lover of humanity is palpitating over the wrongs of the victims of Russian despotism, or wringing out its tears over the thrilling pages of " Life among the Lowly." Would our fair sympathizer suffer a pause in this intoxication of sentimental grief, to hear the not less pathetic story of yon widow and her tattered orphans, shivering in the rough winds, and asking for pity at her very threshold ? It has passed into a proverb, the philosophy of which is not at all obscure, that habitual

Novel-reading sympathy.

Proxy.

"Miss Ophelia."

novel-reading tends to steel the mind most hopelessly against the demands of every-day practical beneficence. They who dwell in an unreal world, or always on the other side of this, though it be the keenest of their pleasures to banquet on the ills to which others are heir, will do little to make existence brighter to the sorrowing around them.

Somewhat akin to this unproductive philanthropy, is that disposition which shrinks from the self-denial of a personal activity in laboring for the greatly needy but forbidding subjects of a Christian charity; while it cheerfully empowers a substitute to do this work. Most of my readers will readily recall the admirable sketch of a character like this in the volumes which the genius of one of our country-women has given to tens of thousands of our people. If the truly excellent person, who sincerely desired the moral elevation of the slave, drew back almost in consternation from the proposal of *her-self* undertaking the civilizing and educating of a young heathen of this class, it was only a weakness which probably many more of our very earnest reformers would develop, if put to the same severe test. It is to be hoped that they would also as resolutely, as successfully, overcome its unworthy promptings.

There is another style of professed philanthropy, which claims to walk pre-eminently in the footsteps of the Good Samaritan. It attaches itself to strong minds and impetuous natures, concentrating all their thoughts and energies around some one glaring evil of the times, and giving to the passion of making war on this the power of a complete tyranny over their entire life. It is so much the more lamentable, as, by thus producing what may be termed a moral monomania, it wrecks the usefulness of some of the noblest intellects of our race. It cannot, in fact, do its proper damage on a feeble spirit. I must give this picture from the pen of one unri-

One-idea philanthropists.

Sketch from Hawthorne.

valled in a nice analysis of human nature among our later writers, and who seems to have known, by a very close contact, the original of his portrait.

"I loved —, as has already been enough expressed. But it impressed me, more and more, that there was a stern and dreadful peculiarity in this man, such as could not prove otherwise than pernicious to the happiness of those who should be drawn into too intimate a connection with him. He was not altogether human. There was something else in —, besides flesh and blood, and sympathies and affections and celestial spirit.

"This is always true of those men who have surrendered themselves to an overruling purpose. It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle. When such begins to be the predicament, it is not cowardice, but wisdom, to avoid these victims. They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he makes himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second, and the third, and every other step of their terribly straight path. They have an idol, to which they consecrate themselves high priests, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious." *

Allowing a strong poetic coloring here, there is too much accuracy, too much life-like vividness, to admit of a mistake as to the truthfulness of the conception. What then is the defect in these varied manifestations of the philanthropic

* Hawthorne's "Blithedale."

Defects how to be supplied.Wilberforce.

spirit? Wherein are they not like his compassion who drew, in this parable, the outline of his own heaven-taught love to the miserable? The pity which evaporates in mere emotion, or which would do its duty by proxy, if it be a repulsive duty, needs the infusion of that disposition which led the Samaritan to stop and examine for himself this wounded man, to take the most energetic measures for his relief. It may have been very inconvenient for him to do all this, but he looked about for no escape, no substitute. The harsh and over-rapid and headstrong reformer might profitably muse how tenderly this good stranger poured the soft oil and cleansing wine into these inflamed hurts: and conclude that fidelity to duty has no quarrel with the forbearance of a kindly temper. And all of us should remember, that a right love of man cannot exist without a sincere love of God. It is not the sympathy or the activity which the sight or the report of distress may arouse within us, to relieve man's temporal afflictions alone. It is a religious estimate of man's great worth, a religious compassion for his well-being — a desire, a life-long endeavor to bless him, as a child like ourselves of the Eternal Father, a being of moral endowments and immortal relationships. True philanthropy embraces but exhausts not itself in questions of mere secular, social, political reform, amelioration. It pursues these, as a legitimate consequence of a supreme devotion to the regeneration of a world to right, to holiness, to God. Christianity, not nature, made a William Wilberforce what he was; converting a remarkably susceptible temperament from what might easily have been a career of spendthrift, luxurious frivolity, into one of the most complete models of a benefactor of humanity which the world has yet seen. What a Christ-like life was that, which consecrated vast wealth, brilliant talents, great social power, and nearly a half century of parliamentary office to the high-

Earth's great necessity.

est ends of national, political justice and mercy, causing his name to be like that of an angel of God to the oppressed and the friendless ; which enthroned that name yet higher on the lists of glory through the humble, consistent, earnest piety, whose steady, brilliant light has guided what multitudes man knoweth not, to Christ and salvation. This style of benevolence is earth's great necessity. Having this, we shall be in sympathy with Jesus.

“Thou, whose pitying heart
Yearned o'er the countless miseries of those
Whom thou didst die to save, touch thou our souls
With the same spirit of untiring love.
Divine Redeemer! may our fellow man,
Howe'er by rank or circumstance disjoin'd,
Be as a brother in his hour of need.”

CHAPTER XVI.

I AM COME TO SEND FIRE ON THE EARTH, AND WHAT WILL I, IF IT BE
ALREADY KINDLED? — LUKE.

ANOTHER of the paradoxes of Christianity ! Was not the announcing message of the Gospel, “Peace on earth — good will to men ?” Did not Christ forbear to break the bruised reed, did he not preach the law of gentleness, and invite the restless, the disturbed passions of the breast to repose on him, because he was “meek and lowly in heart ?” How now then do we hear him saying, in uncompromising tones, “I am come to send fire on the earth” — fire, the emblem of “discord and violence ;” and if I find it already kindled, and blazing fiercely in the world, what will I do ? Shall I therefore draw back from and desert my mission ? Shall I wish that this conflagration had not commenced ; shall I attempt to quench it ? No : though its flames are gathering closely and hotly around my kingdom and my own person, let them burn onward. It is a burning which will but consume the worthless, noxious rubbish, while it shall stimulate and strengthen the soil of man’s moral nature for the vigorous growth of a better harvest.

This is noticeable, that spirits earnestly in love with truth have never shrunk from its publication, its defence, because of incidental evils involved in its maintenance. Else would our world have enjoyed the benefits of few if any of those processes of purification, which have from age to age averted from its degenerating millions the judgments of God. Efficiently to carry forward the struggle of right and truth

A Christian paradox.

Zeal and love.

The fire burning.

against wrong and delusion requires, indeed, much of the temper of a genuine prophet — an Elijah, a John the Baptist, — rather, of a greater than either ; for to a less convinced and confirmed spirit than this will hardly be given grace to meet unfalteringly the startling alternatives of its mission among men. The errand of a sincere servant of God among his disobedient offspring, carries with it consequences perfectly appalling to a benevolent mind ; yet, by a singular apparent self-contradiction, nothing can steadily prosecute that errand and venture those results, but a real, a Christ-like benevolence. The fire must be kindled, must be kept burning ; it is needed to light men heavenward ; it is needed to clarify earth's sin-infected atmosphere, to try every man's work, of what sort it is ;* and the hand of a love like God's must still feed that flame, though it shall burn downward to hell, no less than upward to the secure heights of final glory. So Paul understood his instructions and executed them, when he exclaimed, " Yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel ! " while he was most painfully conscious that to some his preaching was " a savor of death unto death," — death of a double dying, because of the facilities so ample of life rejected.

" Bless'd eyes, which see the things we see !
And yet this tree of life hath proved
To many a soul a poison tree,
Beheld and not beloved.

" So like an angel's is our bliss,
Oh ! thought to comfort and appal —
It needs must bring, if used amiss,
An angel's hopeless fall."

Nothing is more obvious, than that this conviction of the

* 1 Cor. 8:13.

Sunlight and showers.The bound set loose.

collateral injury of his presence among the unbelieving of his countrymen, threw a tinge of sadness over Christ's habitual feelings, while it did not at all retard his movements, or neutralize his religious honesty. We shall discover nowhere a more admirable triumph of principle than here. We have seen the sun, after a summer shower, holding brilliantly onward its noonday path, shorn of not a beam of its brightness, while still that cloud is weeping down its last drops of glistening rain, and rolling itself away as if from the track of a conqueror. Thus did the moral fidelity, the discriminating benevolence of Jesus pursue their high vocation, yet ever amidst a sky shaded with many a cloud, moistened with many a shower of sorrow over the increasingly calamitous destiny of those for whom vainly light had sprung up in the region and shadow of death.

What, in a trivial controversy, would be a mere pertinacity, becomes a noble firmness of will, when great issues are at stake. This must interpret for us Christ's persistence in doing violence to one of the favorite, most inveterate, but wholly perverted sentiments of the Jewish rulers. He was teaching in one of their synagogues on the Sabbath. A woman was there who for eighteen years had been afflicted with a physical infirmity or contraction of her body, which prevented her assuming an erect attitude. Christ's expression concerning her, "Whom Satan hath bound," may indicate that she was under some more mitigated visitation of demoniacal agency.* Christ's notice was arrested by her pitiable state; there may have been an appealing word or look for his aid. He did not hesitate to heal her, though directly under the sharp glances of the men who had so often before raised a storm of indignation around him for similar

* So Trench.

The law of Sabbath-employment.

acts of alleged impiety. The fire was again stirred to a new intenseness. The ruler of the synagogue, awed seemingly too much to rebuke Christ personally for this deed of superhuman authority, nevertheless did it virtually by administering to the people a stern reproof for coming to be cured on the Sabbath. "There are six days on which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." Now, if it were true that it was a violation of the fourth commandment to do a thing on the Sabbath which might be done on another day, that Pharisee's remark could not be easily challenged; for this and the many like acts of Jesus might readily have been hastened or deferred a day. But Christ makes no such concession. He puts the matter in a most perspicuous point of view. You loose your ox or your ass on the Sabbath, and lead him away to watering, servile as that work is. And shall not a human, an immortal being be loosed from a thralldom of physical and spiritual suffering like this on any day, however sacred to God and religion? It is not here so much a question of the absolute necessity of the thing at this precise moment, as it is of its inherent excellence, its entire harmony with the objects of this day of joy and blessings. And being thus, it is as right, as permissible, as though it were actually as needful as the watering of an animal on the Sabbath. This was Christ's criterion — the essential quality of an act in reference to the design of this institution, and not any mere outward considerations. And the ruler of that synagogue was a "hypocrite" in Christ's adjudgment, because his zeal for the Sabbath had no appreciation of, no sympathy with, its true nature, but was altogether a superficial, a conventional jealousy for a piece of barren ritualism.

With but a shade or two of difference, this same scene was repeated on the Sabbath probably next succeeding.

The sick with dropsy cured.The grasp of an analogy.

Invited to the table of a chief dignitary of the same sect among the Jews, Christ found there a man sick with the dropsy. It is not necessary to deepen the turpitude of these Pharisees, by supposing that this was a snare set to entrap the Saviour into another offence against the ecclesiastical powers. Yet there was an expectation of his interference, for they watched him narrowly. We perceive, however, that Christ's thorough self-consciousness of rectitude, and unswerving decision were making an impression on these minds, if not to soften their resentments, at least to embarrass their plans. They observed his movements in silence ; and even when questioned by him on this very point concerning which they had been so free to express their opinions, now they would make no response. Christ removed this malady, and justified his doing so by another perfectly conclusive defence. If one of them — the very strictest observer of God's day — should have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, or a pool of water on the Sabbath, he would lift him out on the impulse of a simple compassion. The grasp of the analogy was too manifest to need even a formal statement. They could not answer him again to these things. Their casuistry was not equal to the encounter of this plainest of common sense.*

But as Christ's day of labor was hastening to its close, his attention was increasingly occupied with matters of far greater moment than the balancing of the demands of a ceremonial obedience. At every step we discover a growing solicitude that his presence among men may not fail of its right, spiritual results. A question is put to him, "Are there few that be saved?" Perhaps it was a captious inquiry ; perhaps, in his mind who propounded it, it looked only to a salvation from secular, political disasters impending over that

* Compare above, Chap. VII.

Few saved?Fear, a Gospel-motive.

people. But be this as it may, Christ's apprehending and answering it are perfectly transparent, unambiguous. *Few that be saved!* Ah, this reaches onward to another life; it involves the soul's unending state. Rather should the inquirer have asked, "Lord, shall I be saved?" For thus Christ responded, in words as weighty and urgent now as then; "Strive," strain every nerve, "to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able." Here comes into the foreground of man's busy existence distinctly, impressively, its grand, its final purpose. This is that which should tax his energies, which should draw the lines of thought and anxiety across his brow. This is the business of an earnest, a fully resolved spirit; for many seeking this end faintly, or fitfully, or otherwise faultily, shall not be able to secure it. This is a business which brooks not delay. The period for its transaction is limited, uncertain, returnless when it shall have expired. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are," then little will it avail you to remember the past offers of his mercy made to you; little, to have lived in a land of Christian ordinances, however respectful towards them, if still impenitent. "He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." The Great Preacher sometimes at least drew upon the *fears* of men, in

The great supper.Three evasions.

view of the unchanging discriminations of eternal joy and sorrow.

At the Pharisee's table, after the healing of the man sick of dropsy, the conversation was directed by Christ to the same general issue. Having in a few pregnant sentences repressed the vain rivalry of the guests for precedence in distinction and display, and enjoined that charity which looks after the objects of its benefactions in those who on earth can make no similar recompense, our Lord took up again the bearings of his labors and proposals upon the religious interests of men. They were reclining around a sumptuous banquet; this gave suggestion and shape to his words. "A certain man,"—and who but himself was this?—"made a great supper and bade many." The servants are dispatched to announce that all things are in readiness. But the invited have only excuses, apologies, regrets, to return. These first selected guests were from a portion of the community more favored by fortune than those ultimately gathered. They represent the Jewish race, primarily called of God in the development of his purposes of grace among men. But more universally, this feature of the parable finds its counterpart in the reluctance of the prosperous worldling to divert his attention from earthly to spiritual themes. We see this in the nature of the pleas put in to justify their non-attendance at the feast. One is the man who has acquired a comfortable property, and he must needs go and see it, must gratify again and again his feeling of pleasure and of pride, by walking over the acres which he can call his own, by surveying and admiring the product of his sagacity and industry. This were all very right but that these his acquisitions have become his idol. Another is he who is toiling after success; he must test yet more the qualities of the five yoke of oxen which he has just bought. He is evidently one

A prayer often answered.Christian compulsion.

who is launching out still more adventurously in enterprises and speculations, the issue of which is not altogether obvious. He must be excused at present from all other claims. A third is of another variety yet of secular pre-occupation. He has only but now settled himself down comfortably in domestic life, has married a wife, has made a banquet of his own, with which for the present he is quite content ; why should he leave his pleasant engrossments to attend an invitation elsewhere ? What a masterly pencil, which has thrown upon this breathing canvass the exact outline of every day's observation of the life of ungodliness, in all ages.

“ I pray thee have me excused.” That is a prayer often offered and as often answered. These men were allowed to be their own choosers, as are all others. Then were the messengers sent out hastily and zealously into every highway and lane, among the hiding places of poverty, and manifold misery and misfortune, to find attendants for this prepared supper. So, when the Hebrew nation had proudly, sensually, contemptuously rejected Christ, the apostles hasted, with what fervent rivalry, over the whole surface, through all the dark corners of the Gentile world, to publish the grace of God in redemption ; and from lands remote and barbarous brought together the stranger and the outcast to sit down to the table, whose luxuries the children of the covenant had spurned. This too is a type of what we all witness — salvation refused by the wise, and embraced by the foolish. Often does the servant of God turn away disheartened from the easy indifference to religious interests which a worldly prosperity is so apt to foster, to bear with hopeful expectation his message, where affections have been opened to Christ's words of mercy by disappointments, losses ; where wearied beneath the heavy burdens of adversity, souls have been made willing to recline at length on the bosom of divine

Discriminations of converting grace.

love. "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." But it is after all only that compulsion which secures the voluntary consent of man to yield to duty, to cast off the bondage of unrighteousness. Might not those who excused themselves have come? Might not those who came have stayed away? How is it with your own consciousness of freedom in this matter — you who have accepted or declined this same summons? We need not seek beyond the operating of God's Spirit upon human minds, in entire harmony with their constitutional liberty, the causes of the strange diversities of the results of truth;—

"Why, at the same fond bosom fed,
Taught in the selfsame lap to kneel
Till the same prayer were duly said,
Brothers in blood and nurture too,
Aliens in heart so oft should prove,—
One lose, the other keep, heaven's clue;
One dwell in wrath, and one in love.

"Why vainly oft our arrows speed,
When aim'd with most unerring art;
While from some rude and powerless arm
A random shaft, in season sent,
Shall light upon some lurking harm,
And work some wonder little meant."

But ours is the commission, without discouragement still in the great Master's name to issue the invitations of his mercy. "Go out quickly," is still his command; spare no effort of urgent, faithful compassion. It is for immortal lives ye are seeking. What can be comparable to these in value; what interests can transcend these in pressing importunity? Save them "with fear" if you can; but if saved they be not, let the blame be on them, not on you. Would that we could realize how solemnly, thrillingly, the great purposes and

Two ships of war.Counting the cost.

claims of existence concentrate here. How would it lessen the glory, the worth of a thousand things which now dazzle our eyes, engross our thoughts. Awhile since, two ships of war were approaching each other in the British Channel. They were proudly eyeing each other, and all was making ready to exchange a friendly salute, when the awful cry pierced the air, "A man overboard!" And instantly every other thing was forgotten, and the boats of both vessels were launched, and sinewy arms were pulling in noble strife to catch the drowning sailor. What was aught else, at that moment, to his periled life? So our business and our pleasures might oftener have pause for a yet nobler strife in behalf of perishing souls around us, if we more justly comprehended the terrible doom of a final loss of God's provisions of grace for sinners in Jesus Christ.

But Christ was as candid in stating the real difficulties of a religious life, as he was solicitous to induce men to embrace it. Here, too, we have our lesson. Nothing is gained by walking blindly along this path. To come after Christ, is to forsake all else that interferes with Christ's spirit. To love him, is to hate all that makes war upon his kingdom. He must reign supreme, his law take precedence in our souls, be it at the sacrifice of father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea and our own life also. All this must be loss to us, if it stand between us and our Redeemer, or we cannot be his disciples. So he has said it. It should be known from the commencement. 'Tis folly to begin a house, and not be able to finish it; to march out to a battle with but half a force sufficient to meet the foe; and all because pains were not taken to count the cost beforehand. Salt is good, if it retains its strength. But if it has lost this, it is good, for what? For as much as is a professed discipleship to Christ, which did not remember that to be a Christian is to bear a

A three-fold picture.

The lost sheep.

The lost money.

cross, perhaps many of them, and which has become faint because of the roughness of the way.

“I am come to send fire on the earth.” And it must burn wherever the antagonist principles of loyalty and disloyalty to God are brought into close contact. But the Christian must not shrink from the heat, though it be as of a furnace. If that fire be kindled in the very shrine of his dearest affections, this trial of his faith, if sustained firmly, shall be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

In answer to the complaints of the Pharisees, that he devoted so much attention to the more wicked and debased classes of the people, Christ spake three other parables in immediate succession, which carry yet further forward, in varied beauty and power, the exhibition of his interest in human salvation. The first two, as has been remarked by commentators, express, in the search for the lost sheep, and the lost piece of money, God’s *seeking* efforts for sinners. The last shows us, in the penitence and return of the prodigal, the effects of these efforts in a relenting, a converted transgressor. These sketches form the different parts of the same moral picture, not repeating themselves, but blending their respective features into a harmonious, admirable whole. The sheep that had strayed to the wilderness, is followed by the shepherd — “I am the Good Shepherd,” — is found, is brought home upon *his* shoulders ; it was too much hurt and wearied to go alone ; and there is more joy over the lost one found, than over the ninety-nine who went not astray — the men who, so far as legal righteousness was concerned, had never wandered from the laws of Moses. This was commendable ; but the piety of a regenerate sinner was of a very different value. The woman sweeps her house most diligently for the lost piece of money ; divine love, with a mother’s tenderness,

The prodigal son.Joy for the repenting.

lights the torch of truth, and by the Holy Spirit's application of this his chief instrument, looks after the prize so costly until it is recovered ; then there is rejoicing among the angels of God. The father — and it is more than an earthly father — waits for the son who has shared his liberal bounty, but has thanklessly, rebelliously turned not only away from, but against, parental authority and love. But, sought for by restless memories and self-accusations, God's agencies of conviction, in the land and in the service of the aliens ; he has come to himself, has arisen, and returned to his home. He hardly dared to venture this step, so unworthy did he feel himself to be after all this shameless ingratitude. But he is not repulsed from that forsaken door. Prodigal, publican, sinner, as he is, great is the tumult of gladness which welcomes him back. All the demonstrations of pleasure, usual to an opulent, patriarchal establishment, are put forth. There is feasting and music, and only one clouded brow in the house — that elder son's, who, in the nice culture of all the proprieties of a ritual, pharisaic virtue, cannot understand why there should be all this congratulation over the restored fugitive, the regenerate companion of harlots. But that father could understand it, and so can God, and all his friends on earth and in heaven. "The redemption of the soul is precious."

As no reference is made in this parable to the idea of a mediation between these estranged parties to effect their reconciliation, an argument has been drawn from it to the sufficiency of a simple repentance, on the sinner's part, to ensure his acceptance with God. But Scripture must be interpreted in harmony with itself. A failure to mention a truth, in a given connection, cannot set aside its positive assertion in other, similar connections. Besides, the whole circle of Christian doctrines cannot be set forth at every point and turn of revelation, no more than in every sermon, which

What is *not* taught in this parable.

may nevertheless be a Gospel sermon, fitting accurately into its place in the great system of an evangelical faith. The drift of this parable, as already intimated, is to display God's readiness to re-embrace the returning sinner, rather than to declare specifically the necessary *conditions* of that return and acceptance. How these bear upon our case, is elsewhere sufficiently unfolded. God grant that we fail not of the results of this his great mercy ; that we individually also hear from his lips the blessed words, "*This* my son was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found !"



CHAPTER XVII.

WHOSOEVER SHALL SEEK TO SAVE HIS LIFE, SHALL LOSE IT; AND WHO-
SOEVER SHALL LOSE HIS LIFE, SHALL PRESERVE IT.—LUKE.

THE right adjustment of this world to the next, is the matter of chief difficulty in the conduct of human life. Each has its controlling spirit, wholly unlike in essentials, and only to be harmonized by the subjugation of the less to the greater. This truth our Lord expressly affirms; “No servant can serve two masters — ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” He had reached this inference from a parable, which had led him to discourse upon the wisdom that should govern man in subordinating secular to moral interests. An unjust steward, accused, convicted of fraud towards his proprietor, and about to be ejected from his trusts, had so prudently managed affairs that he still had friends who did not desert him in his extremity. Now, this was only a piece of cunning policy which most adroitly accomplished its end; and as such, though dishonest, was commended by that officer’s employer as a bold and skilful stroke of business tact. Christ, in stating this case, by no means sanctioned its moral obliquity. But this is the drift of the illustration — as with great forecast and promptness, that unjust steward turned even his desperate fortunes to his own ultimate security, so should we employ all temporal facilities towards the one grand end of present existence — the soul’s well being forever. Primarily this was addressed to the disciples as a lesson of christian duty; and a censure is added, that the “children of light” are not, upon religious principles, so prudent, sagacious, thrifty, as are the “children of this

This world and the next.Children of light.

world," upon simply earthly and selfish considerations. But what is christian duty is universal duty. Of no man should mammon be the master, unrighteously holding him in the chains of selfishness; but mammon should be our servant, so employed that through it God shall be glorified, and our souls trained, in the exercise of a genuine benevolence for an entrance into the everlasting habitations of heaven. Thus faithful in these things which being perishable, are least, God will commit to us the true riches. This is the prime wisdom. Here the antagonisms of earth and heaven, worldliness and piety, are adjusted by the submission of the former to the latter. Whosoever, reversing this order, neglecting this fundamental spiritual law, shall on contrary principles, seek to save his life, shall lose it — shall not succeed ultimately; but whosoever shall lose his life in the judgment of men, by obedience to this maxim of Christ, shall really and unmistakably preserve it.

A truth of first magnitude and endless consequences is wrapped up in these words. But Christ had not done with its application. With that astonishing facility of diversifying the illustration of the same idea, for which his teachings stand unrivalled, now he gives forth another representation of this losing of life, which we may more accurately call a history than a parable. It is not a describing of one thing by another, which is essential to the parable, but in this story of the rich man and Lazarus to which we have arrived, we have a simple narration of a transpired fact, with no resembling counterpart; no twofold image before us, as of a seal and its impression upon the wax, answering to the parable and its literal sense. It is a single, self-interpreting statement of the folly and the doom of a selfish, sensual worldling.

It is a strange misconception of this narrative, into which

Rich man and Lazarus.

Strauss.

Misconceptions.

Strauss has fallen, that it has no reference to the moral conditions of men, here or hereafter, but merely would tell us that the future life will reverse the external circumstances of want or plenty which men in this world experience ; that the rich will then be poor and the poor rich. Again, if some of the early Fathers found in it their favorite allusion to the judicial prostration of the haughty Jewish polity and the exaltation of the despised Gentile church, those who now quote them to sustain this as the *only* sense of this scripture, should have the fairness to confess, that this national construction was with those ancient Christians, but a symbolic rendering of the text, according to their frequent custom, by no means prohibitory of the obvious and conceded interpretation which the universal faith of the Church has affixed to its impressive terms.*

A fanciful conjecture has attempted to establish a personal identity between this miserable victim of besotted earthliness and that young man who refused to follow Christ when required to sacrifice his riches for a life of self-denial ; and still further, that this catastrophe is the same more fully given in the account of him, who whilst priding himself in the abundance of his excessive prosperity, was arrested by the summons, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee !" But though an effort has thus been made to illustrate the progress of sinning, from bad to worse, there is no evidence to sustain this theory. He may have been Herod, a suggestion started as long ago as Tertullian ;† but this is immaterial, for in all ages the originals have been lamentably numerous. If he was only, however, a private citizen, his wealth as his ostentation must have been regal. He wore the royal purple, a few drops of which dye were ex-

* v. Trench on the Parables,* 386.

† Trench, as above, 370.

Selfishness not wealth the crime of this sinner.

tracted from a most rare sea shell-fish ; hence its extreme costliness — the gift of kings to one another ; and the fine, white linen, some of which, Pliny tells us, was exchanged for its equal weight in gold. He fared sumptuously every day. We begin to see the character of his guiltiness. They have stupidly misconceived the whole relation, who have like Strauss for example, aspersed this record with the sarcasm that “the only crime of this man was his riches.” His crime was his hard-hearted selfishness, which lavished all his resources upon his own personal enjoyments ; his self-idolatry — the utter absorption of his interest in his own prodigal pleasures ; his enslavement to the world, which he had a large opportunity of using as the instrument of good to his fellow-men. There was a total eclipse to his soul of any radiance which shines from spiritual regions to show to man his duties to his race and to his God. He might have sat for the poet’s portrait —

“No sun or star so bright
 In all the world of light,
 That they should draw to heaven his downward eye :
 He hears the Almighty’s word,
 He sees the angel’s sword,
 Yet low upon the earth his heart and treasure lie.”

And thus worthless for all moral uses, inspiration has not deemed it worth while to tell us even his *name*. “A certain man” is all the notice which God bestows on so abject a slave of sensualism — “the name of the wicked shall rot ;” while the neglected beggar, carried from his shut door by the angels to Abraham’s bosom, is known through all the world by a title which christendom has delighted to hold in especial honor, as of a peculiar friend of Deity.

The thorough contrast of these men’s moral preferences here, created as irreconcilable a difference in their after des-

Piety not poverty the passport to heaven.

tinies. They both die. Lazarus finds an end to his troubles in paradise. The rich man finds the commencement of his, or rather, their intensified, unmitigated continuation in perdition. Observe, that as the latter was not condemned for his outward fortunes, but for his ungodly dispositions, so was not the former saved because of his temporal poverty, but because of his humble, submissive, christian temper. Wealth does not necessarily exclude this temper, though it may make its culture more difficult. Nor does poverty necessarily produce it. "Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean." Blessed are not simply the poor, but "the poor in spirit." The state of the inner life had fixed these men, the one in bliss eternal, the other in eternal sorrow.

It can be nothing but a most unnatural and forced exegesis which denies this rendering of the narrative. No one would dream of rejecting the doctrine of future and endless punishment from this description, except to bend it to a contrary theory of religion. And with all the ingenuity expended upon it, it will not bend to any such theory of promiscuous, everlasting salvation. Still the pale image of this lost sinner rises before our eye — afar off, mid upper realms of beauty, he sees the souls of the sainted dead; *he* begs, who was not used to ask for favors; *he* begs of him, who once was a beggar at his gate, but is now a prince, that in pity he will bring some slight alleviation to the misery of a sufferer in that place of woe. He is proving to his wretched cost that whosoever will seek to save his life, on earthly, irreligious principles, shall lose it. He heaped up treasure like the dust: but —

"Not all the gold that is beneath the moon,
Or ever hath been, of these toil-worn souls
Might purchase rest for one." *

* Dante's Hell, Canto VII.

The great gulf.

Abraham's bosom.

Useless entreaty.

Nor may heaven send relief to him, a thousand fold more tortured by his own rebellious will, than by whatsoever other accompaniments of inflicted pain. He had received his good things, the only kind of good which his besotted nature was capable of appreciating, enjoying. Would such a heart have been any more happy even where Lazarus was? That "great gulf" fixed between him and "the bosom of Abraham," was fixed as impassably, as necessarily, in his own spiritual condition as a lover supremely of sin, as it was fixed there by the irreversible judgment of a holy God. And *this* he must "remember" with an unending regret — that through his whole probation he had done nothing save to widen and deepen that "bridgeless gulf" between himself and the moral possibility of a peaceful immortality.

Another entreaty is equally unsuccessful, that some one might be dispatched from the spirit-world to warn his remaining ungodly brothers of their own preparing ruin. This has been seized upon as an indication that a relenting, penitent emotion was springing to life in this man's bosom; hence it is argued that future punishment is reformatory — that, consequently, at some period of their immortality, all unhappy souls will be brought by this penal discipline to a state of softened, subdued, unresisting acquiescence in God's government; and thus will be fitted for the remnant of a blissful eternity. But it is easy to see a wholly contrary cause of this reference to the survivors of his kindred — "a secret justifying of himself, and accusing of God. If only I had been sufficiently warned, if only God had given me sufficiently clear evidence of these things, of the need of repentance, of this place as the goal of a sensual, worldly life, I had never come hither. But though I was not duly warned, let at least my brethren be so." *

* Trench on the Parables, p. 384.

Ghosts.

Spirit-rappings.

A text for the times.

This was a most false impeachment. He had been warned. No Jew, with "Moses and the Prophets" in his hands, could cast this blame on God. He had had enough of light ; so had his brothers. They possessed the same Bible which Christ and his disciples read ; more than David and Daniel and Isaiah enjoyed. One sent from the dead could testify to no more facts conducive to repentance than those pages had revealed to them. Men are not to be frightened or persuaded away from their wicked idols, by ghosts, or spectres, or spirit-rappings. God encourages no such superstitions. The claims of his service walk forth in the daylight of an intelligent and intelligible appeal to men's understandings and consciences. They ask, they are susceptible of no added impressiveness from things of "such a questionable shape" that they "will not stand" to be calmly, rationally challenged, but when you speak to them, "'tis here ! 'tis here ! 'tis gone !" * As long as there are those who, by whatsoever *medium*, shall endeavor to extract more inducements to control human wills out of the unseen state, than God's inspired words supply to us, so long will this response of Abraham to the rich man's prayer remain as a *text for the times* ; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Though not explicitly mentioned, it would seem that Christ had made another tour to the north after the autumnal feast of Tabernacles which had brought him last to Jerusalem ; for we find him again returning to that city along the borders of Galilee and Samaria. An incident recorded of this journey is the following. Near a village on the route, ten men were descried who had been driven abroad into the fields be-

* Hamlet.

Ten lepers.

The grateful Samaritan.

"Where are the nine?"

cause of the taint of leprosy. Nine were Jews, one a Samaritan. A common trouble had made them friends. With a united cry they called upon Jesus for compassion. Without pronouncing first their cure, Christ bade them act precisely as if already healed. He sent them to the priests to obtain a certificate of cleansing, that thus according to the Levitical ritual they might regain their lost citizenship. And as they went they were healed. This is not the only instance in which we have had the lesson taught, that prayer without obedience is useless; that we must take upon trust Christ's readiness to bless us, and without waiting always to know certainly that we are accepted in his mercy, must set ourselves diligently to the discharge of duty as by him enjoined. Our moral as our bodily powers gain tone and strength by exercise. If we have not faith to walk the right road in the twilight, we have no promise that we shall ever enjoy the sunlight.

These lepers were cleansed as they were going to the priests. How far they had gone we know not; but one, and he the Samaritan, becoming aware of his cure, turned back and sought his benefactor with impassioned gratitude. With a loud voice he glorified God, falling at Christ's feet, giving him thanks. The others, begrudging the time it would consume, or with some idea of future acknowledgment of the favor, or from sheer indifference, went on their course. "God (says an old commentator on this passage) has more rent, and better paid him, from a smoky cottage, than he has from some stately palaces."* The legalizing Jews thought only of securing their civil re-instatement at Jerusalem; the poor Samaritan thought first and chiefly of showing his love to his great Helper. Christ understood and appreciated the differ-

* Burkitt.

Pre-intimations.

Judgments preparing.

ence. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Are none found who returned to give glory to God save this stranger? And he said unto him, arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole;" whole in a spiritual as well as a physical soundness. Willing to lose his life, his worldly advantages for Christ, this man preserved it abundantly.

In a variety of significant allusions, Christ glances onward to the scenes that were hastening towards their development, at a nearer or remoter remove. Questioned by the Pharisees "when the kingdom of God should come," he replies that it cometh not "with observation"—with outward parade or show.* Its principles, its facts were already among them, working out gradually their results. To his disciples he gives renewed warning of the trials which were thickening upon their pathway, the type of those yet more distant perils through which his church must pass ere the final end should come, and her Lord return to comfort her with his presence. That would be a sudden, unexpected event, as the flashing of the lightning, as the inrolling of the deluge, as the fiery shower on Sodom. Like these, also, it would surprise men in their every-day career of good or evil, separating the one from the other, taking and leaving, by a nice discrimination of character. These judgments preparing for the world were partly at hand, but partly far in the yet unreachd future. As in other connections, Christ presents them all in one view before his disciples, without distinguishing the separate moments;† and urges the duty, which has lost none of its spiritual weight, to maintain a careful, earnest, resolved purpose of fidelity to his cause. For still the servant of the life that now is shall lose his life and not save it; destruction shall

* Neander, *Life of Christ*, p. 317.

† Neander, 318.

The widow and the judge.How a symbol of the church.

consume the morally corrupt, as the eagles hover around the field where the slain of the battle lie.

The parable of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow is the fitting after-piece to this representation, as it was spoken in immediate connection with it. Amid these perils of the Church, in all coming ages, she could have but one defence, one refuge. Her stronghold was to be, as it ever had been, at the mercy seat of God, prostrate in prayer which would not be denied. Her privilege thus to plead the righteous favor of her Divine head is put in the most forcible terms. She is pictured as a widow — and under the grasping despotisms of the East none are more exposed to wrong than they — who comes to sue for redress of her injuries ; but the judge whom she entreats is an accomplice in these very frauds. He will not hear her, for he fears not God neither regards man. Still she besieges his judgment-seat with the same cry — “Avenge me of mine adversary !” At length, worn out by her persistence, what he refused to the equity and pity of the case, he yields to his own desire to be rid of its annoyance, and passes the order to grant her petition.

It has been often remarked, that none but Jesus Christ could have been justified in the boldness which thus likens the Christian’s God to such a magistrate. But it is no likeness of character, as of course must be seen. It is the resemblance of contrast, if the phrase be permissible, out of which is drawn the strongest assurances for our faith. Christ removes the prospect of this woman’s success to the farthest point of hopelessness in the temper of her earthly judge, and then gives to her importunity the triumph. Now, if against these obstacles prayer could avail, how much more will it prosper when, not an unjust judge is on the throne, but a faithful, a compassionate God ? He will avenge his people’s

Prayer, its true spirit.Pharisee and publican.

wrongs, will protect the Church of his plighted love, will break the bonds of her oppression, beneath whatsoever anti-christian power. She is his "elect;" has he chosen her, and taken her to his bosom as his bride, only to desert her, when her enemies gather to her overthrow? Sin may indeed vex and worry her until but a small remnant of "faith on the earth" shall survive. But this, in the lowest depths even of affliction, shall have a mighty voice to bring God's help to the rescue.

As prayer is the Christian's last and victorious resort in all manner of distress, it becomes of utmost moment to know its true spirit. It must be earnest, as just unfolded; but earnestness may take on a hard, a querulous, an obstinate, a self-conceited temper; it may essay to storm heaven's gate by an impertinent clamor, or to claim heaven's interference on pretence of a personal right of demand. To guard these points, Christ added another graphic outline-sketch to his canvass.

Two men, a pharisee and a publican, went up to the temple to pray. What were their prayers, and who went to his house justified, and on what grounds—we know. The former dealt only in thanksgiving, which was not improper, had he selected the right topics of praise. But when he could think of nothing for which to be grateful but his own not moral but ritualistic goodness; when he must needs be comparing his legal punctiliousness with the inferior performances of others, and this before the heart-searching God; then his pretended worship became a mere abomination to heaven. The latter came on no such errand. Afar away from the holy place to which the pharisee had boldly advanced, this publican had but a short petition to present, and it involved only himself and his Maker. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" was the outbreathing of his penitence, his self-con-

The blessing of the children.

Christ their friend.

demning humility, his submission to heaven's grace and government. "Be merciful," — *ἰλάσθητι* — a word which signifies not reconciliation only, but reconciliation through some gift, sacrifice, offering; * thus carrying a marked allusion to salvation through a *redemptive* agency. The true spirit of prayer is, consequently, a self-renouncing, lowly spirit. It casts the helplessness of the creature, the worthlessness of the sinner, upon a Divine friend and deliverer. This ensures its victories. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." With this spirit living within her enclosures, the church is safe, though the heathen rage and the kingdoms be moved; and so is the least, the feeblest of her flock.

Near this point, three of the Evangelists record the incident of the blessing of the young children by our Saviour. That was a most ill-timed rebuke of them by the disciples. Little infants were among them, for Jesus "took them in his arms;" he folded them to his heart; he caressed them with tender affectionateness. Christ loved little children. He loves them still. They constitute a most important part of the charge of his church. It should be their sacred nursery for a life of piety. Whether or not this welcome of them to the divine and human sympathies of our Lord has any proper bearing on the ordinance of their baptism, it marks them as objects most dear to God; it claims for them the warm interest of his friends for their spiritual welfare; it gives us strong confidence of their salvation if early removed by death from our embrace. This scene is familiar to us as "household words," in the representations both of the pencil and the pen. It is worthy the choicest efforts of each. A gifted mother, Mrs. Hemans, has made it the theme of one of her graceful sonnets.

* Passow in Trench.

The significance of this transaction.

"Happy were they, the mothers, in whose sight
Ye grew, fair children! hallow'd from that hour
By your Lord's blessing! surely thence a shower
Of heavenly beauty, a transmitted light,
Hung on your brows and eyelids, meekly bright
Through all the after years, which saw ye move
Lowly, yet still majestic in the might,
The conscious glory of the Saviour's love!
And honored be all childhood, for the sake
Of that high love! let reverential care
Watch to behold the immortal spirit wake,
And shield its first bloom from unholy air;
Owning in each young suppliant glance, the sign
Of claims upon a heritage divine."

I am, however, strongly of the belief, that this transaction furnishes, under the circumstances of its occurrence, a valid basis of assent to the practice of infant and household baptism. These mothers were members of the Hebrew church. Their children were also, by circumcision. That church was composed of parents and their offspring. A Jew knew nothing of any other ecclesiastical organization, or kingdom of heaven. Christ's wonderful career had announced him, in the hearts of the more thoughtful, religious part of that nation, as the true Messiah-King of the new dispensation. The motive of this gathering around his person, probably but a representative case of many similar, was doubtless a solicitude to know how the spiritual revolution advancing was to affect those dearest objects of maternal love — these infant ones. It was not the mere benediction of a saintly man which was thus sought. It was in fact a glance attempted to be had into the very structure of the forthcoming church of the Gospel-day. It is enough to vindicate this position to remember, that three years nearly of Christ's public life had awakened an intense movement among the spiritual elements

Infant-rights under the covenant of Abraham.

of that land of the ancient covenant. Was this to be permanent in the rights of children as well as of parents ?

Christ's action and words I take to be, on this occasion, an affirmative reply. Still let the children come, for "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Not of *the childlike disposition*, simply, is this said. Those words are not used. We do not know that these then present were particularly *childlike* — that term expresses rather an *ideal* of what we think should be true of the young, than what we commonly find is. "Of such" is obviously spoken of *children*, be they more or less "childlike." Of these, then, the heavenly kingdom is to be composed, both now and hereafter, as it has been. Christ had been introduced formally and ceremonially into the church of Israel by circumcision. So had these infants. So should the children of the church yet be children of the covenant, by a rite of similar meaning and value. That is, the ancient, divinely-established connection of household union with the church should go on, Christ gave them plainly to understand, without interruption. Nor could any other teaching have allayed their anxieties. Had Christ published the abrogation of the ordinance of infant consecration to God, under the Abrahamic covenant, for the ages to succeed him, it would have raised a storm of indignation against his cause which would have made a loud report all over the land, and around the tribunals which compassed his death. But not a whisper of such commotion was heard. The proof is very strong which comes out thus incidentally to our doctrine. This is, that the church covenant, the church unity, the church seals and promises are one from the beginning ; that Christ changed them in nothing important as an organic principle ; that the kingdom which he preached disfranchised no one who was a member of the previous form of the same kingdom. Into this, his apostles were still to

Not annulled by Christ.Infant baptism.

“proselyte” the nations on the same platform of *household* privileges which was the only idea of a religious economy that a Jew ever had. Nor is there any more reason to make *personal belief* an indispensable condition of baptism, than of the sign which was put upon the body of a Hebrew child; for the apostle tells us, that “circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of *faith* ;” yet not of the child’s certainly, but of the parents’ representatively. Then why not as properly so in baptism? Nor yet again are these necessarily ruled out of the kingdom because “he that believeth” is to be “baptized.” For if this is to embrace those who are not old enough to believe, in its limitations, then, by parity of reasoning, they who must not be baptized on account of this want of an impossible personal faith, cannot be saved for the same cause, but must be “damned,” so far as Christ’s commission to the apostles can instruct us. On these grounds, which cannot here be more largely exhibited, I look upon this incident as Christ’s authoritative declaration that the Church was to go on by the same constituting law which had governed all its former history.

Again in Jerusalem, at the winter feast of the Dedication of the Temple, Christ renews his public teachings in the porches and environs of that sacred edifice. The same assurances of safety to his friends still fall from his lips. How strengthening to those who were conscious that they sincerely loved him must have been these pledges of their eternal security, as the fiery trial of their faith drew nigher each hour. Were they indeed his disciples? Then shall they never perish, says their Redeemer, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; as Mediator in the flesh I acknowledge his supremacy — and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one; one in this purpose to defend all

Christ's friends shall never perish.

the holy from their adversaries, one in power and wisdom to make good that purpose, as we are one in the indivisible, the mysterious unity of the Godhead. Glorious protection of all true believers ! They cannot perish till the covenant, the throne, the very life of Jehovah have first been destroyed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COULD NOT THIS MAN, WHO OPENED THE EYES OF THE BLIND, HAVE CAUSED THAT EVEN THIS MAN SHOULD NOT HAVE DIED? — JOHN.

IN our studies of the Evangelists, the question is ever recurring upon us between a realistic and an idealistic theory of interpretation. This is a prominent controversy of our own age. The scepticism of the present generation of educated mind, is a sort of supersensual philosophism — a fastidious rejection of the historic supernaturalism of the New Testament as well as the Old, and the doctrines of both together ; while, unlike the earlier and less circumspect deism, it makes large pretensions to a regard for what it calls “ the essence of Christianity,” and claims for itself the peculiar mission of cultivating and propagating a “ spiritual faith.” This is the most subtle and mischievous variety of misbelief which has yet appeared, because it wears so solemnly the garb of devoutness, and uses so fluently the dialect of piety, while it deliberately takes from under the edifice of revealed religion its entire foundations. A true believer, perusing these narratives, finds a firm basis of his trust in the teachings and mediation of a Divine Redeemer, as he too asks with a consenting mind, “ Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ? ” He feels that it is safe to confide in, to obey a master who thus had power over nature and death. But the attenuated spiritualism of the day sees only the cloud-wreaths of an airy or a misty idealism in these myths, these word-

paintings ; nor deigns to accept so gross, so material a groundwork of its religious superstructure.

We have found occasion to bestow some attention to this topic at previous points of our present labors. The occurrence of another of our Lord's stupendous works at the grave of Lazarus, furnishes an appropriate opportunity to characterize a little more minutely the spirit and drift of this mode of handling God's word.

It is a sufficient refutation of this assault upon the historic supernaturalism of our faith that it cannot live at all save by the most violent methods of explaining these records. Take a few out of many specimens. The Godhead could not have required Abraham to commit so horrible a crime as to sacrifice his son. Abraham dreamed that he must do it, and prepared himself accordingly. A lucky accident substituted an animal for his son, and this was the voice of Deity, as the ancient superstitions taught. Moses ascended Mount Sinai and built a fire there consecrated to God's worship, before which he prayed. (Those who have toiled up such rock-covered peaks might wonder how he obtained wood enough for this purpose.) Then, a terrible thunder storm came on, which occasion he seized to proclaim the laws which he had drawn up in retirement, pretending to the people that God had conversed with him in the mountain. Christ's walking on the water was only wading as far as the shallows extended and then swimming. His feeding the thousands was only beginning to distribute a little bread which he had, and this so wrought on the generosity of the rest, that every man who had provisions with him shared them with others. The lame man healed by the apostles was an impostor ; he had pretended to be lame ; but the apostles threatened him with the name of the Messiah, which alarmed his superstitious fears, and he arose and walked. Peter stabbed Ananias in a fury

 Historic supernaturalism.

Niebuhr on miracles.

of passion to which he was subject.* These are solutions of Biblical facts from the best critical authorities of this school. We are not surprised to hear the same authors telling us, that when Jesus reproved Martha for being so much engrossed in domestic cares that she had not time to listen to his discourse, he only meant by the "one thing needful" that *a single dish* would suffice for his supper! Thus is the volume of our religious faith made soulless and dead as a bloodless, breathless corpse. Of course the raising of Lazarus from the tomb was merely resuscitating him from a four days swoon.

Now I cannot persuade myself to leave this theme without recording on the same page with these strange extravagances the mature convictions of such a master of historic criticism as the great Niebuhr — the dissector of Rome's fabulous age — a man whose death left no successor to his learning, his sagacity, as a detector of historic frauds. "In my opinion, he is not a Protestant Christian, who does not receive the historical facts of Christ's earthly life, in their literal acceptance, with all their miracles, as equally authentic with any event recorded in history, and whose belief in them is not as firm and tranquil as his belief in the latter. The fundamental fact of miracles, according to my conviction, must be conceded, unless we adopt the not merely incomprehensible but absurd hypothesis, that the Holiest was a deceiver, and his disciples either dupes or liars; and that deceivers had preached a holy religion, in which self-renunciation is everything, and in which there is nothing tending towards the erection of a priestly rule, nothing that can be acceptable to vicious inclinations. As regards a miracle in the strictest sense, it really only requires an unprejudiced and penetrat-

 * v. Stuart's Letters to Channing, L. V.

Theodore Parker.

What he does *not* believe.

ing study of nature, to see that those related are as far as possible from absurdity; and a comparison with legends or the pretended miracles of other religions, to perceive by what a different spirit they are animated. Moreover, a Christianity after the fashion of the modern philosophers and pantheists, without a personal God, without immortality, without human individuality, without historical faith, is no Christianity at all to me; though it may be a very intellectual, very ingenious philosophy. I have often said that I do not know what to do with a metaphysical God, and that I will have none but the God of the Bible, who is heart to heart with us." * Thank God, it has not been given to the scepticism of this age to count this tower of strength among its citadels. So the battle goes onward — the adverse batteries answering one another from plain and cliff; but truth's entrenchments are impregnable, her victory sure.†

A summons of distress from the family at Bethany had

* Niebuhr's Life and Letters. Harpers. 1852. pp. 362, 286-7.

† The question is asked sometimes — Was Niebuhr an infidel? *Not* if Theodore Parker *is*. See the difference. Says Mr. P., in his "Two Sermons," &c. &c., Boston, 1853, pp. 13-14, "I do not believe there ever was a miracle, or ever will be; everywhere I find law,— the constant mode of operation of the infinite God. I do not believe in the miraculous inspiration of the Old Testament. I do not believe that the Old Testament was God's first word, nor the New Testament his last. The Scriptures are no finality to me. Inspiration is a perpetual fact. * * * I do not believe the miraculous origin of the Hebrew Church, or the Buddhist Church, or the Christian Church; nor the miraculous character of Jesus. I take not the Bible for my master, nor yet the church; nor even Jesus of Nazareth for my master. I feel not at all bound to believe what the church says is true, nor what any writer in the Old or New Testament declares true; and I am ready to believe that Jesus taught, as I think, eternal torment, the existence of a devil, and that he himself should ere long come back in the clouds of heaven. I do not accept these things on his authority. I try all things by the human faculties."

Lazarus restored to life.A whisper of love.

brought Jesus to their relief from beyond the Jordan, whither he had again retired before the hostility of the Jews. He seems purposely to have protracted his absence, until the supervening of natural death should give him occasion to demonstrate his Godhead once more, by restoring the dead to life. A sufficient cause was thus remanding him into the midst of his bitterest enemies, and he promptly obeyed the mandate. A four days' burial must certainly put to rest the question of actual dissolution in the case of Lazarus, in a climate like Judea's. It was a scene of heavy grief; and as the company of stricken hearts wended their way slowly to the tomb, "Jesus wept." Once more the fountain of his human sympathy overflowed, nor did he seek to hide those tears as unmanly, or to repress them as wrong. They are neither. This spectacle teaches us that religion has nothing in common with a hard, stoical apathy; that "it would not dry up the stream of our sorrow, but keep it within its banks." How sweet the picture of heavenly pity given us in these two words,—placed here, may we not believe, for the express consolation of all Christ's afflicted friends in every coming age. How often has the memory of them stole into the crushed spirit, like a gleam of light, a whisper of love from a better world, beside some bed of mortal sickness, some open coffin, where pale lips answer no more to the voice of affection; beside yonder green grass-mounds which hide the precious dust of earth's dearest ones. Did Jesus weep with Mary and her sister Martha? Then does his unchanged heart still tenderly sympathise with the griefs, the trials of all his people. Did he remove that load of trouble from these mourners, as his voice called back the sleeper to their arms? So eventually shall every "night of weeping" be turned into a "morning of joy," for those with whom he has made a covenant by adoption. "I am the resurrection and the

 Consequences of this act.

 An unconscious prophecy.

life," saith the Lord ; the restorer of hope, the giver of undying pleasures. Much as the Christian may be made to suffer from the dislocation and breaking up of present plans and connections, all that is worthy of his permanent desire shall be his again, where disappointments are unknown. This is our assurance in Christ. Let it sustain us in every sorrow.

" Not by the wayside ruins should we mourn,
 Who have the eternal towers for our appointed bourne."

An immediate result of this public display of Almighty power was the determination of the Jewish council to put Christ speedily to death. On the plea of the danger of political disturbances if Christ were not thus arrested, Caiphas the High Priest, a Sadducee, now directly demanded his sacrifice to save the nation from its perils. "It is expedient that one man die for the people, that the whole perish not." In this requisition of an atoning victim for ends wholly secular, little was that "bold, bad man" conscious of the use which God would make of his agency to bring to pass another atonement, of which his words were as undesignedly a remarkable prediction. Ungodly hands were pushing onward the car of man's redemption. But the hour of the power of darkness must yet awhile linger.

Meantime, Christ again withdraws from the precincts of Jerusalem some twenty miles northward.* Here, after pronouncing his benediction on a company of little children, in whom he again reminds his disciples that the spirit of his service and his kingdom has a most impressive emblem, he was met by a person of more than common distinction, upon a most interesting business. He was a "ruler of the syna-

* Neander's Life of Christ, 332.

The young ruler.

His ideal of religion.

gogue" — an *'αρχω* — possibly then a member of the Sanhedrim; not so young a man as commonly is supposed, as he speaks of his conduct from his "youth up" in a way which would intimate the possession of considerably mature years.* According to his theory of piety, this man was evidently a scrupulous religionist. With his own ideal of goodness he was positively in love, and was diligently on the search of more. He was an earnest man; had made a business of cultivating strict morals. He was a successful man in this labor, having kept the commandments with exemplary perseverance. He was a sincere religionist, manifestly persuaded that he was on the right path to heaven. There was much about him that was attractive, for the natural graces of his character won strongly upon the sympathies of Jesus. But all his careful, earnest, sincere and amiable qualities of temper and of life did not prevent his being found wanting, when Christ weighed him in the balances of holiness. "One thing thou lackest," was a startling sentence to his self-flattering soul. Picture his smile of self-satisfied complacency, as he run over to the Saviour the inventory of his virtues, settling blankly into a gaze of consternation, settling frowningly into a look of stern displeasure, as the all-embracing mandate fell on his ear, "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me!" Christ knew the case which he was treating. He knew that this man was very rich, that in heart he was a mammon-worshipper, notwithstanding all his outward uprightness. He placed the searching test of an obedient spirit at the point of a sure detection of inward, governing purpose. "As vinegar upon nitre, (natron,) † so was the effervescence pro-

* Jno. 11: 54 — Coleman's Hist. Geog., after Robinson.

† Hitchcock's Rel. of Geol., p. 7.

A disappointment.

Consecration.

Bradford of Plymouth.

duced in that bosom. He was greatly desirous to "inherit eternal life;" but he wished to achieve it in his own way. So do many still. On a path of his own construction, he would *run* to heaven. But from that narrow gate, that rugged road to which Jesus pointed him, and from that heavy cross which Jesus bade him take and carry, he turned away sorrowful. See him slowly departing, pondering with clouded brow these bitter words of that teacher of a self-denying, self-renouncing discipleship. And as we catch his last retreating shadow, let us listen to those solemn, mournful accents in which Christ told his silent auditors how impossible it is for a soul that loves this world more than God, to enter into God's kingdom. No: the life of God, the life of the glorified is not thus to be won. Christ must be followed in his humiliation, if he is to be followed to his throne of celestial honor. And be the hindrances what they may, they must be resisted even unto blood, if need be, striving against sin. This is the language of that faith which carries the Christian pilgrim sure to his salvation, —

"Chains of my heart, avaunt, I say —
I will arise, and in the strength of love,
Pursue the bright track ere it fade away,
My Saviour's pathway to his home above."

Two hundred and fifty years ago, a youth in England was left, by the death of both his parents, his own master, in the possession of a comfortable independence. It was that Bradford, who afterwards was so long and so prominently a pillar of the first New England church and commonwealth. Religion in his day was a theme of almost universal ridicule. To be a Christian, after the Puritan stamp, was to be laughed at by a nation, and to be sorely persecuted by that nation's rulers. In early life, he became personally impressed with the duty

Cotton Mather.The spirit of Christianity.

of consecrating himself to God. His purpose was met by a storm of displeasure among his kindred and neighbors. Says Cotton Mather, he took up a very deliberate and understanding resolution, from which all the rage of his friends in vain endeavored to divert him. Every kind of method was tried to reclaim him from his madness, but he answered them thus : " Were I like to endanger my life, or consume my estate by any ungodly courses, your counsels to me were very seasonable. To part from your company will be as great an evil as can befall me. Nevertheless, to keep a good conscience, and walk in such a way as God has prescribed in his word, is a thing which I much prefer before you all, and above life itself. Wherefore, since it is for a good cause that I am like to suffer the disasters which you lay before me, you have no cause to be either angry with me or sorry for me. Yea, I am not only willing to part with everything that is dear to me in this world for this cause, but I am also thankful that God has given me a heart so to do, and will accept me so to suffer for him." * Was this extravagance, fanaticism, though it bore this hero of the cross amid the wild terrors of these wintry, savage shores, even as the same submission to Christ might have carried that rich young ruler through equal or greater trials, for the kingdom of heaven's sake ? Let Jesus answer. " And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

This is the genius of Christianity — not selfishly to hold a beloved or a valued treasure ; not ambitiously to grasp at those conditions of temporal state and ease, which may pass away existence in the luxury of being ministered to by oth-

* Cheever's Journal of the Pilgrims, P. II., chap. 12.

An ambitious mother.Blind men of Jericho.

ers. The mother of the sons of Zebedee would fain have had the promise for her children of a seat on either side of Christ, in his kingdom of secular grandeur still by her anticipated. How little did she yet understand the methods of Christ's regal supremacy ! This the prize of a Christian's chief calling and desire ? This outward pomp the measure of his true exaltation ? No. The privilege most honorable of a friend of Jesus was to drink most deeply of the cup which was mingling for the Master's lips, to be baptized most heartily into the baptism of suffering which was to sprinkle his brow. This fellowship he gives to all ; and he who meekly accepts it, in duty and in love, as God appoints his lot in life, is great among Christ's brethren ; " even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Christ was now entering the city of Jericho. Three of the Evangelists record the restoring of sight to the blind in this vicinity. But each account is diverse from the others in a point or two, though in the main they harmonize. Critics are mostly agreed that these relations are, notwithstanding, of but one miracle. The discrepancies are thus : in Matthew, two blind men are healed as Christ is leaving Jericho ; in Luke, one is cured as Christ is entering that place ; in Mark, one is healed as Christ is departing the city. But the other circumstances agree so exactly, that it is scarcely supposable they should have been thrice repeated. The best solution seems to be this — the silence of either narrative concerning the second blind man does not disprove that there were two as Matthew affirms, on the plain historic principle, that to give the part of an incident does not deny the whole, as given elsewhere. As to the difference of time stated, it is not improbable that the application was made to Christ by the one blind man as he was approaching the city, according to

Discrepancies harmonized.Tax-gatherers under the Romans.

Luke, who goes immediately on to relate the sequel of this case as if then transpiring; although the cure might not have actually followed until Christ was leaving Jericho the next day, when the second blind man was present and shared in this restoration.*

Christ's entry to Jericho was one of the few demonstrations of popular favor which his earthly sojourn called forth. But though surrounded by a vast and excited crowd, he was not elated by this transient adulation. Dearer to his ear than all these noisy huzzas was that piteous cry, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" The multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. Not so the Saviour. They too were in earnest, and were not to be easily repulsed. They were in trouble. They knew it. Christ was near. He might never be again. Now was their best, probably their only time. It was the time of a divine forthcoming to their succor. Christ bade them come through all that pressing throng. Tenderly he asked their desire; omnipotently he touched their eyes, and they received their sight and followed him. So will he heal the spiritual blindness of those who thus put in their suit at his mercy seat, conscious as deeply of their wants, undeterred as resolutely by whatsoever hindrances.

This visit to Jericho was made memorable by another act of distinguished grace. Under the provincial government of Rome, a numerous corps of officers was employed to collect the imperial revenues. They were of two classes — general receivers, who were responsible for large districts of country; and subordinate agents, who held from these a limited range of operations. These latter were the "publicans," whose outrageous extortions upon the unprotected people had made

* Trench after Bengel.

Zaccheus.

An eastern custom.

Repentance.

their name the expression of all manner of fraud and cruelty. How deeply Zaccheus may have been implicated in these crimes, we cannot determine. He may have been of the better order of these tax-gatherers; but no one could be altogether unstained by the conspiracy of guilt, who lived by this business. Evidently he felt that he had some heavy restitutions to make, when conscience began its arraignments. He was mingled in the dense escort of Jesus in the suburbs of this place of his abode. Curious to catch a sight of the visitor, whose wonderful works were in all men's mouths, he climbed into a roadside tree, thus to aid the smallness of his stature. Christ passed beneath it, paused, and summoned him down to act as his host within the city. This affords us a glimpse of oriental manners, where, in the want of hotels, travellers have a conceded privilege to select a house of entertainment, and these rights of hospitality are seldom refused to such a claim.* Zaccheus met the demand with alacrity, flattered not a little, it may be, at the honor of a selection to this duty. Christ entered the mansion of this wealthy worldling, and with his presence, salvation came to that house.

How precisely it came, we have no report. What were the words which Jesus let fall at that table, through which the heart of this man was convicted of its sins and brought to a true repentance, we can only conjecture. But what is much more to our purpose, we have explicitly set forth the exact type and nature of that repentance, through which this publican entered into fellowship with the Redeemer.

This exercise has several varieties. Some repent of sin only when it subjects them to punishment, either at the hands of civil law or of God's providence. They are virtuous

* Bush's Illustrations.

| Its varieties. | False and true. | Restitution. |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
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outwardly only under this kind of pressure. Some are made penitent by reproachful memories in the absence of temptation, but slide easily back into wrong indulgences, when the seducing influence returns. Some are quite ready to repent secretly of their sins, but have no public acknowledgments to make. Others will repent for the future, but, while they promise a prospective uprightness, cannot be brought to rectify past injustice and misconduct. In all this there is no abandonment of the selfish for the benevolent principle. Depravity does not yield a single material point to holiness.

“ How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,
And love the offender, yet detest the offence ? ”

Very different the repentance of the rich publican. It was not coerced by any external trouble ; he was in the full flush of prosperous fortunes, yet trembling had seized hold of his spirit. As a man confronts a polished mirror in clear daylight, and detects uncleanness upon his person which he had not suspected, so in Christ's pure presence this man saw that his heart, his life were black with iniquity. And what he saw he honestly confessed. Nor did he evade that hardest of all tests of sincerity to a money-loving taste — the relinquishment of ill-gotten gains. He had piled them around him with a grasping hand. But the new perceptions of a regenerate nature showed him that these were none of his. Power, possession, gave him no title to the spoils of dishonesty. He does not seem to have figured out whether he could afford to restore what thus belonged to others, before he should pledge himself to this act. What, “ by false accusation ” — by illegal overreachings — he had taken from any man, that he stood prepared to refund even four-fold. The

Religion revolutionary.Self-executing charity.

very benevolence of heaven glowed in his bosom. He would be both just and generous. The half of his goods he would give to the poor, not a few of whom his own evil covetousness may have made beggars. A thorough revolution was manifestly working through his entire elements of feeling and of life. He was a converted man. God was enthroned in the seat of former idols. Now he would live for another purpose than his old selfishness. His penitence was not spurious. His faith was not dead, but energetically active. His love was already purifying the innermost fountains of his spiritual being.

Let these lessons be remembered ; — religion is a radical revolutionizer of the soul. Repentance is a public as well as a private renouncement of former sinfulness. It is not a mere sentimental self-condemnation, but an earnest, laborious undoing of evil ; not a guard against future unrighteousness only, but an honest rectification of past wrongs, so far as is practicable. It loves to wipe out old offences, to heal old dissensions, to repair old injustice, to make all things new. Be this the test of our piety, for by this God will try us. How should we also delight in scattering blessings to the needy with a liberal hand, with *our own* hand, that we may see the good of our benefactions. “ Those who defer their gifts (says Bishop Hall) to their death-beds, do as good as say, Lord, I will give thee something when I can keep it no longer. Happy is the man that is *his own executor* ! ”

CHAPTER XIX.

BUT I HAVE A BAPTISM TO BE BAPTIZED WITH ; AND HOW AM I
STRAITENED TILL IT BE ACCOMPLISHED.—LUKE.

A baptism of tears and blood and death ! One short week only now removed the victim from that altar, which he was reaching forward to embrace with none the less ardor, because he foresaw full clearly every circumstance of suffering which he should encounter. For a moment, however, the popular breath, which hailed him joyously a few days before at Jericho, still sang him hozannas. From that city he had proceeded towards Jerusalem, with the vast caravan of pilgrims to the Passover from the upper provinces of Palestine. At every step the concourse was accumulating, for many had gone forth from Jerusalem to meet him whose last great act of power at Bethany had filled the whole region with the wonder of his name. Near that village his disciples found a young colt, upon which they seated Jesus, while the enthusiastic people spread their garments along the road and bedecked the highway with green branches of trees, lifting and prolonging the rapturous shout, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord ; hozanna in the highest !” This was a most significant demonstration. In Christ’s permission of it, we see not a weak lapsing into any vain self-adulatory mood. It was a part of those public events which were designed to mark him as more than a prophet of religious truths, as more than a priest of a holy faith ; as a crowned and reigning king—the Jew’s Messiah ; but more than this, the world’s Messiah, Saviour and Prince. Hence,

Transient popularity.Preparing for the crisis.

he now withdrew not from these plaudits, he checked not their utterance, he shrunk not from the redoubled wrath of his foes which he knew they must provoke. The time had come for this regal pronouncement ; and in the very guise which the old Hebrew seer hundreds of years before had described, the son and Lord of David advanced as a monarch to the royal seat of his ancestors ; to claim not indeed their broken and dishonored sceptre, but through agony and sacrifice to achieve for himself on that memorable spot, an empire of nobler renown and broader expansion than earthly potentate ever ruled.

But a spectacle sublimer than all this triumphal parade was that firm self-collectedness, which never for an instant deserted this single handed champion. He seems now to have re-visited these familiar localities as though he would take a deliberate survey of the scene of the last tragedy ere it should break upon him. He enters Jerusalem and into the temple ; and “ when he had looked round about upon all things,” and now that the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. Yet not until he had spoken solemn, stirring words to the multitudes there congregating, concerning his death, his salvation, his glory ; the light which he had come upon earth to kindle, the service which he and his Father would honor, the judgment consigned to his hand to execute, the doom of those who rejecting his confession should prefer to walk in darkness. Jews and Greeks heard his thrilling sentences, heard that audible intonation from the skies, to some of their ears like the rolling of thunder, to others, like an angel speaking, which pledged once more to his prayer the unfailing sympathy and faithfulness of heaven. That too was the evening, when, ere he left this city of a history so wondrous of God’s mercies and man’s guilt, over which also a cloud of dark shadows was fast gathering that so

Tears over Jerusalem.

Two sons.

Householder.

soon should turn day into midnight, — he paused and looking back perhaps from the road up Olivet, he uttered that pathetic lamentation, as he wept and said: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Oh! would that those words had stood as the epitaph only of proud, thankless, unbelieving Jerusalem. But alas! they might tell the wasted probation as truly, and the lost eternity of thousands on thousands, children of the covenant too, whose day of hope they would not know as a day to repent of sin and submit to God, but trifled it all away in pleasure and worldliness, and only bethought themselves to look for salvation in time to find that these neglected things must forever be hidden also from their eyes. Is this your memorial preparing against the judgment? Think of this. Jesus, though he wept in pity infinitely deeper than human, over that favored city of his Father’s care, did not hold back the least fraction of that desolation which its crimes had provoked. Jesus will as sternly, though in grief as poignant, visit the sinner’s retribution upon his unrepentant soul.

Christ’s closing addresses to the promiscuous assemblages around him were occupied with these prophecies of woe and judgment to a very marked degree. And the measure of these inflictions was accurately to be governed by the neglect of privileges conferred. Thus the publicans and harlots, represented by that son who at first refused his father’s service, but afterwards repented, should go into the kingdom of heaven in preference to those who said “I go, Sir,” but “went not” — the more favored, the more promising subjects of God’s care, but the more rebellious. So, with more of detail, this ranker guilt and sorer recompense of his unbelieving countrymen is set forth in the sketch of the tenants of that “Householder” to whom divine Mercy likens itself. He had planted,

The son slain.The marriage-banquet.

protected, trained a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen. We have almost identically here the prophet Isaiah's beautiful picture of the same kind providence, the same electing grace of God. * But when the owner of that vineyard sent to receive its fruit, the messengers are beaten, stoned and slain — so did God's prophets fare at the hand of that stubborn race. At last, a nobler agent undertakes the errand — the son, the heir of this estate ; surely said that father, they will reverence him. But human wickedness was equal even to his murder. So is it yet ; for still our Lord is crucified in ignominious rejection. What then shall be done to these ingrates, these rebel servants ? He will miserably destroy them and transfer their opportunities of good to others who will render him obedience. And not less is this sentence executed, whenever a sinner dies in his iniquities and his lost birthright of salvation passes to another, than it was, when the Gospel of redemption went over from the Jew to the Gentile, after the former had slain the Lord of glory.

At this point another of Christ's parables is recorded, which throws a yet deeper impressiveness around this solemn theme. A certain king, God, the great monarch, makes a marriage festival for his son. But the earliest bidden either make light of it, or violently maltreat and slay the bearers of the invitations. Mark that their condemnation who merely turned away indifferently, the one to his farm, the other to his merchandize, is the same with theirs who killed outright the servants of this ruler. Persecution even to blood is only the full grown and rampant form of the heart's native depravity. None of these could come to that bridal feast. A righteous visitation of punishment "destroyed those murderers and burned up their city." Next, the heralds of the

* Isaiah chap. V.

The wedding-garment.What it was and signifies.

king go abroad, as did the apostles into heathen lands, and collect guests for this banquet—a multitude both *bad and good*. But let us not mistake this contrast. It is spoken not absolutely of true goodness, but comparatively, indicating only those degrees of developed sinfulness which we observe among the irreligious, from the grossly wicked to the reputably virtuous. From all these God furnishes converted souls to share the privileges of his kingdom. And now the entertainment goes forward, the Gentile church rejoices in her espousals unto Christ. By and by the king appears and passes among the ranks of visitors. His eye is arrested by an offensive object. There sits a man who has not attired himself in a fit manner for the occasion. Our best authorities, strongly incline to the opinion that the modern custom of providing special garments for the festal guests was also in use at the time of Christ. Chardin tells of a visier who lost his life by refusing to wear a vestment sent him by his king. Schulz describes this dress as a long robe with loose sleeves, a sort of embroidered mantle thrown over the person's ordinary clothing, * occasioning very little delay or trouble to the wearer. For some cause this individual had refused or neglected the wedding apparel. But whether through carelessness or ill will, his conduct was a contempt, an indignity towards his entertainer. He surely knew what was expected of the guests, what was provided for them. There was no requisition here of an impracticable, an unreasonable thing; no unjust severity in the treatment which this man received. Nor is there when God deals a like measure of justice to the unregenerate intruder into his visible kingdom, of whom the guest without the wedding garment is the intended representative. When the messengers of Jesus Christ go out to

* v. Trench on the Par. 191.

Speechless.

Ten virgins.

A contrast.

summon men to the banquet of redemption, they bear the offer of that robe of righteousness which Jesus wrought; they ask no one to come except in its attiring; it is the only vestment for the covering of our poverty, our nakedness, which God will recognize. We may wear it with honor and acceptance at the bridal of the Lamb. If we will not, but venture into the church without it, then may we look to hear the same doom, in our "speechless" consternation, from the lips of an offended God, "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Glancing back a moment, we remark with Neander, that the parable of the wicked husbandman gives us the idea of the *work* which God requires of men in actively developing his kingdom on earth; while that of the marriage of the king's son sets forth the *joys* attendant on the consummation of that kingdom in the fellowship of all its acknowledged friends. We add that the doom of expulsion to the unfaithful laborers, the unprepared guest, is the doom of eternal sorrow which awaits final ungodliness. Reserving a recurrence to this thought by and by, we have now still another view of this same "kingdom of heaven" in the ten virgins, who went out to escort a wedding company from the home of the bride to that of her husband. It was a procession with torches by night. The hour was far protracted, as frequently is yet the case, and all these virgins slumbered. But by midnight they were suddenly awakened to join the advancing throng. Now a startling contrast appeared in their condition. Some of their torches needed only a little trimming to burn brightly, and they who thus were furnished moved on with the joyous train into the banqueting-house. The others, begging in vain for a supply of oil from their more provident companions to rekindle their expired lamps, went off to pur-

The door shut.Who are these virgins?

chase what should have been secured before against this emergency ; but when they at length came and knocked for admittance, they found that all who could enter had entered, and the "door was shut." Eastern travellers give us many very graphic instances of the inexorableness of this exclusion from these feasts of the *too-late* arriving. All that they could obtain in answer to their plea for reception was the stern repulse from the Lord of the closed mansion — "I know you not."

The clear, spiritual discrimination runs through this narrative, which marks the former. If like those it be susceptible of a national, secular application to Jew and Gentile, that is not its obvious, leading signification. It deals with individual character and prospects. It describes God's true friends, overborne indeed for a time by the stupefying influences of the world, but at heart regenerate, and successful in securing the crown of final endurance ; and it pictures the unrenewed sinner, careless of more than some general respect for Christianity, or trusting to the mediation of human saviors, overtaken in his folly and condemned, like those other outcasts from hope, to a future of despairing wretchedness.

Here also, as in the marriage of the king's son, the enjoyments of the communion of Christ's kingdom are the prominent relations presented ; but immediately following we have once more the other view, namely of the exertions demanded by Christ, of all who love him, in the parable of the *talents*. If from the peculiar imagery of the preceding likeness of his kingdom in the parable of the virgins, the expectation of a too speedy coming of the Bridegroom, should have been excited in his disciples' minds, Christ may now have intended to check that anticipation by representing himself, after distributing these talents, as going "into a far country" from which he should not return until a long period had elapsed.

| The talents. | The pounds. | Resemblances and differences. |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------------|

There were expectations of this kind in the early church concerning Christ's second advent, which the apostles also found it necessary to correct. Our Lord has not yet come back from that far journey, in person, to sum up finally the accounts of earth. In his own high sovereignty he is still apportioning to men the abilities, the opportunities of serving him and his cause. Five, two, one of these talents are bestowed, but to every intelligent soul something to be improved to spiritual profit. How much, God keeps the true reckoning. Of none will he ask a return disproportionate to the endowment. The grand collective settlement is at the last judgment, but death in fact brings each individual account to its close; for "the deeds done in the body" are the subjects of that investigation and award. They who have faithfully met the claims of Christian responsibility, which is the same thing as *human* responsibility, be it with larger or smaller resources, shall be honorably and richly recompensed by their Lord. But the slothful servant, who first hid his talent in the earth, and then returned it unused, unproductive to its lender, with words also of censure and insolence — he met the righteous sentence of his guilty indolence in the stern decree, take from him the talent and give it to him that hath ten talents; "and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here the truth to be noted is that Christ expects us all to be useful to his kingdom according to our positions of wider or narrower influence in life; and that a life of utter spiritual unfruitfulness will ruin the soul. In another very similar, but at the same time strikingly unlike parable, *ten pounds* are divided *equally* to ten persons. One turns his single pound into ten; another his into five; one does nothing with his loan. The reward of these different measures of industry in multiplying the same investment is graduated by this re-

Two foreseen catastrophes.Matthew xxiv. and xxv.

lative success. In the "talents" it was the faithful purpose of devotion to Christ, according to diverse abilities enjoyed, which was more looked at in the settlement than the absolute amount of results exhibited. In the "pounds" it is the amount of work accomplished from the same starting point which is made most prominent. Both principles have their place in the government of God. But mark yet once again the uniformity of that other principle, which every one of these representations of the Gospel economy, the kingdom of heaven, has proclaimed, namely, the fatal consequences of the alienation of heart and life from that kingdom. "Take from him the pound and give it to him that has ten pounds." He who has shown the most activity for God shall have the richest reward. He who has shown none, from him shall be taken every thing. He proves himself an enemy to Christ by being an alien from him ; and "those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

These closely related parables, so pregnant with the weightiest interests of individual men, and all pointing onward to the solemnities of eternity—constitute a most fitting and impressive approach to those yet more sublimely magnificent representations of coming scenes, which, from Christ's prophetic lips we are now to hear announced. As his hour of suffering drew on, two grand catastrophes were filling conjointly his eye, the near destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews, whose cup of wickedness was well nigh full ; and far beyond this, the final winding up of all human probation at the end of the world. In the twenty fourth and fifth of Matthew, with some parallel passages of other Evangelists, these topics are treated in a style of thrilling clearness and power. Christ and his disciples were surveying the massive walls of the temple, when he took occasion to tell

Destruction of Jerusalem and Day of Judgment.

them that not one of these stones should be left upon another. They asked him as to the time of this overturning, and of his coming, and of the end of the world. In his extended and highly wrought reply, critics have found some difficulty in harmonizing the results of their investigations. Concerning the concluding passage of this description, from the thirty-first verse of the twenty-fifth of Matthew to the end, the most thorough Biblicists, including some of the ablest of the German, both orthodox and neological, agree that it must be referred to a final day of general judgment.* To strain that grand delineation of the coming of the Son of Man "in his glory, with all his holy angels with him," down to the small dimensions of any transpired historic fact, no scholar has attempted, who has had a high reputation as a scholar to risk. But in managing some of the previous imagery and language, different theories have been adopted by the most respectable expounders. †

Replying to the question of the disciples, as just stated, Christ sketched before their vision an assemblage of phenomena which should precede and accompany the subversion of the Jewish state, changes and revolutions in the social aspects of affairs, as well as ominous signs in nature. The usual prophetic symbols of political convulsions are employed to prefigure these days of trouble which were advancing. *In the midst* of this description, the colors suddenly become of an intenser hue. The whole movement of the mighty panorama takes on a loftier, more awful action. It is as though the seer from an elevated post, had described a scene indeed of terrible interest almost at hand, and while revealing this in emblems of startling force, *yonder* from out the more distant

* Bib. Sacra Vol. VII. pp. 474 sq.

† Cf. Bib. Sacra, Vol. VII. pp. 452 sq. "Eschatology of Christ," and in the same work, Vol. IX. pp. 329 sq. and 449 sq.

Prophetic vision not of time but of succession.

future another immeasurably more wondrous, majestic, fearful spectacle looms up upon his eye, overshadowing the former by its vaster breadth, as one sulphurous storm-cloud is met and buried in the dark bosom of another of profounder denseness. Then the tones of the revealer assume a deepened emphasis, his imagery a correspondent compass and energy. The nearer and lesser catastrophe is lost sight of, as the remoter and more absorbing holds the gaze and tasks the pencil of the delineator to the end. A great variety of instances could be adduced illustrative of this feature of prophetic representation, which makes "a local, temporal event, the sign and pledge of a universal spiritual transaction; and the things ever so remote in time, and whatever important events may have intervened between them, are represented in immediate succession. The prophets themselves for the most part knew not the chronology of the events which they foretold, but only the succession!"* Christ labored, of course, under no such partial acquaintance with the burden of his predictions. But he would seem to have found his purpose of not disclosing the *time*, but only the *fact* and *signs* of these transactions admirably subserved by this prophetic usage, and hence its employment. Those, however who demur at this construction, insist that there be no blending of the two catastrophes, no shading of one into the other, thus; but that the picture of the Jewish subversion be definitely outlined to the close; and then the scene of the last judgment introduced under its own independent portraiture.

The verbal and general criticism relied on by these respective interpretations cannot here be presented. Nor is the question

* Bib. Sac. Vol. VII. p. 466. and cf. Is. ix.-xi. with Matth. iv. 15-16. So Is. xi. and following chapters.—Bib. Sac. VII. pp. 466-470.

Tests of the decisions of the Final-Day.

of a vital nature ; for as I have remarked, the agreement of sound scholars is overwhelming, that, whatever may be held of the preliminary prophecy, the twenty-fifth of Matthew deals with nothing less than the scenes of the final settlements and adjudgments of earth. The parables which introduce that event, as we have noticed, all terminate with the distinct apportionment of reward or punishment to the classes of men involved, according to their spiritual condition. And now, from the bosom of eternity comes forth Christ's throne of last decisions, the tribunal of the world's inquest and everlasting doom. All nations are gathered before him ; and by a consciousness of personal character, which needs no prompting word or look from Him, each passes to the side of friend or foe, swelling the host on either hand of saved and lost immortals. No vain parade of sovereignty is this ; but a day for the formal, authoritative pronouncement of the true, the long denied and outraged, but immutable principles of right government and conduct in a moral universe ; the declaration and the application of the just tests of character ; the adjustment of things to their due relations ; the rectifying of wrongs ; the assorting of all concerns by their proper laws to their proper places ; the closing-up of probation's and redemption's histories on earth by the manifested enthronement of Christ, Emanuel, " God with us," as King of kings, and Lord of lords. The business of that day moves onward in hushed and awful solemnity, while from the opened records of human life the long and varied past is reproduced, and men find their homes and companionships for eternity, as they have loved and cared for, or have not loved and cared for Christ's person, kingdom, friends. We hear no accusations of flagrant crime. The whole inquiry is reduced to its simplest elements, to its most familiar expressions of sentiment and sympathy. Affection, indifference, towards God

Whither tending.The past guarantees the future.

are placed under tests, which a child can comprehend. And as the soul abides or not the trial of its attachment to the cause of holiness and heaven, it is adjudged to life eternal or punishment everlasting.

“ The day
Has come, when virtue from the cloud shall burst,
That long obscured her beams; when sin must fly
Back to her native hell; there sink eclipsed
In penal darkness, where nor star shall rise,
Nor ever sunshine pierce the impervious gloom.”

Towards that decisive hour, the long procession of the ages and the acts of man is steadily wending its constant way. Much which at that eve of his crucifixion lay between the eye of Jesus and his last advent, has already transpired. Some of the most remarkable of those events occurred during the then existing generation, as he distinctly announced. If his proclamation of Jerusalem's downfall did not fail to the minutest letter of the terrible sentence, neither will that other prophecy, which has published to listening worlds his next appearance in the clouds of heaven to judge all men in righteousness; to execute justice on those who have spurned his authority; to acknowledge and honor his servants in his court above. Little as the vain and busy crowds of earth, the ignoble and the mighty ones, think to what point all these countless footsteps are tending, every one of them is measuring its distance towards Christ's judgment-seat. Solemn, impressive fact! There shall we meet each other, there meet the centuries of the departed, there meet ourselves, there know ourselves, our hearts, our histories, our influence for evil or good. It is a thought for devout, for earnest, self-communing study. If God has touched our spirits with the love of the truest wisdom, though folly and self-indulging sin may refuse to heed these warnings of the future, they will not

Tokens of the last advent.Minute-bells.

have failed to catch, to hold our reverent regard. It is a wretched insensibility which notes not the tokens of our Lord's approach, sure proof of the want of all real attachment to his person. But they who are waiting for his appearance, as for the coming of a beloved associate, mark with an eager watch the signals of his return.

“ Faith's ear with awful, still delight,
Counts them like minute-bells at night,
Keeping the heart awake till dawn of morn,
While to her funeral pile this aged world is borne.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE CUP WHICH MY FATHER HATH GIVEN ME, SHALL I NOT DRINK IT?
AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS.—JOHN
AND MARK.

VERY strange are the contrasts of feeling and character which are brought together in this world. That was a most beautiful act of love when Mary of Bethany took a pound of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. In that fragrant offering, the soul's rich affection breathed itself forth in irrepressible fervor. Look now across the table into the bosom of yonder dark-browed man who is eyeing this action with a bitter glance, and is whispering to his next companion about its needless wastefulness. That is Judas, with a traitor's purpose already ripening in his guilty heart. And from this scene so tender, so heavenly, he will go to the conspirators against his Master's life, and sell that life to the cross, and his own soul to perdition, for thirty pieces of silver.

The hour of the paschal supper was at hand. Once more it was to be commemorated by Christ, ere he, the lamb to which that ceremony had pointed for ages, should pour his blood on the altar of a world's redemption. The arrangements were completed, and in a retired chamber of Jerusalem, Christ with his disciples sat down to this sacrificial feast.

It was the last uninterrupted interview of the Redeemer with his chosen followers previous to his death. With an

The last passover.A transition-point.

unusual desire he had anticipated this meeting. Many words of instruction, admonition, encouragement had he to say to these his sheep so soon to be scattered without a shepherd. Precious hours were these into which so many interests were crowding — memories of the venerable past, whose types and symbols of patriarchal and prophetic days were converging to an immediate fulfilment and abrogation in his personal sufferings ; visions of future glories of the reign of grace, centering their lights from time and eternity, revealing an amount and duration of blessedness consequent upon his labors beyond conception boundless.

The paschal supper, to which this little family was assembled, was a simple but highly impressive rite. A cup of wine, poured out and blessed by the head of the household, was distributed to the company ; after which they partook of unleavened bread and bitter herbs, recounting the wonders of the rescue of their ancestors from the slavery of Egypt. This was the declaration or showing forth of the reason of the institution. Then followed the passover lamb, and having again drank of the cup, a hymn of praise concluded the repast.

This was a transition-point from the noble themes and associations of the Hebrew church, to the nobler destinies of the Christian age. Christ especially desired that his apostles, who were to lay the foundations of this new dispensation, should thoroughly comprehend and imbibe the true temper of that Gospel of the kingdom of heaven which it was the business of their lives to preach. Even now at this late moment they had not done with their disputings who should be greatest. Unholy jealousies had marred the harmony of this very entertainment. We should have thought that a sacred solemnity, an absorbing sympathy in Christ and in each other, would here have hushed every selfish, passionate utterance.

Washing the disciples' feet.

How to be copied.

One lesson more they needed to teach them that "before honor is humility." Who but the Son of God could have put that lesson in so melting, so resistless a form?

Rising from the table, and laying off his outer robe, Jesus girded himself as a servant and pouring water into a basin commenced to wash and to wipe his disciples' feet. Nothing which we can imagine could so strikingly have illustrated the true spirit of his life and religion as this astonishing condescension. Its language was — voluntary, cheerful self-forgetfulness among the followers of the same Lord. Wherever the honor of Christ's kingdom demands it, let the greatest become the least. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Here is an example of the Christian disposition, not to be imitated as the Roman pontiff once a year washes the feet of his cardinals, but to be copied virtually in a thousand deeds of kindly considerateness; in the habitual sentiments of a soul which has learned, in the gracefulness of piety, to prefer others to itself. If Christ would do an act like this, where shall his people find justification for arrogance, self-seeking, the evil eye of envy? These tempers belong to a fellowship foreign, most hostile to his.

"We rise in glory as we sink in pride;
Where boasting ends, there dignity begins."

Another trial afflicted the Saviour at this interview. The traitor was there in fancied secrecy, but naked in the loathsomeness of foulest guilt to the omniscience of his abused Lord. He had come with the mask of accustomed friendliness, while the price of treachery was just transferred to his eager grasp from the coffers of the priests and rulers. It was

The traitor there.
De Quincey on Judas Iscariot.

a startling announcement when Christ told that anxious group that the hand of his betrayer was on the table. In unfeigned astonishment the others passed the inquiry, "Lord, is it I?" Theirs was a sincere, a most sorrowful interrogatory, a questioning of themselves with a feeling of self-distrust well suited to their perilous circumstances. With a duplicity, a coolness of perfidy which staggers all explanation, Judas also puts the same question, "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." Then, with a firmness which shrank not from the worst, with a strangely magnanimous subjection of his godlike nature to the machinations of even so abject an agent of satanic and human malice, Christ bade him not delay his work of darkness. "That thou doest, do quickly." *

But though the guilt of betrayal was alone to cleave to this apostate, fearful dangers were preparing to assault the fidelity of all Christ's adherents. In particular, Peter was warned of the efforts which the arch-adversary would put forth to ensnare his soul. But Christ had prayed for this disciple that his faith should not fail. In those intercessions he was safe from utter defeat. So, if under that protection, are we, though Satan should desire to have us also that he may sift us as wheat. That little band was at the margin of

* Thomas De Quincey, in his "Theological Essays," vol. I., pp. 147-177, enters a most original defence of Judas Iscariot as the worst-abused man of all history. He maintains that Judas was a true friend of Christ, and only sought, by bringing the soldiers on him, to stimulate Jesus to a grand *coup d'état* to take his Jewish throne; from which, by a *weakness of character*, his Master was shrinking too long. Judas then hung himself from grief at the failure of his well-intended *ruse*. The paper is worth reading for its ingenuity of special pleading.

I do not know if much importance pertains to the question whether Judas was or was not at the Lord's Supper. Too many like him have been. He was at the Paschal feast, but may have left before the institution of the other. It may not be possible positively to decide this matter.

The Lord's Supper instituted.

Farewell counsels and consolations.

a terrific flood of trials and distresses ; and he who descried the whole was only anxious to prepare it for a firm, a triumphant encounter.

For a more visible and intimate pledge of attachment between his followers and himself, our Lord now instituted an ordinance admirably suited to excite more fervently their Christian love ; to keep his person and his cause more freshly in their memories ; to identify them more perfectly with his mission upon earth. From the fragments of the paschal feast, he took bread and gave it to his disciples as a token or emblem of the body which he was about to offer on the cross for sin. The wine which they had used was consecrated as a symbol of the blood of cleansing, which would soon flow from his wounded side. And with these simple memorials, Christ superseded the passover-rite by another feast directly commemorative of his death for sinners, perpetually to be observed by his church while it shall be found in the world ; a type moreover of that banquet of perfect delights which Christ is making ready for the redeemed in his palace in the skies. In the beautifully simple language of the Evangelist, " he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them saying ; This is my body which is given for you ; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you." What should most tenderly touch their holiest sympathies, and nerve them most heroically for the struggle of a martyr's constancy, if not such words of love as these ? And many other kind and consoling counsels filled up the intervals of this memorable hour,* until, the night advancing, Christ led his disciples out from the city to the garden of Gethsemane.

* John, chap. xiii. - xvii.

Gethsemane.

The three prayers.

The sleep of sorrow.

This spot was situated a short distance east of Jerusalem, at the foot of the ascent of the Mount of Olives. It was a secluded place well known, by former visits, to the company who now sought the shadows of its venerable trees. Here the first great tide of sorrow rolled in its surges upon the soul of Jesus. Withdrawn from the rest a stone's cast, kneeling upon the earth, the chill night air bathing his throbbing brow, he prayed to God his father in anguish which brings from his body that strange bloody sweat trickling down to the ground. He prays that if it be possible the bitter pangs of expiation before him may pass untried. But this is only for a moment. He prays again; and now it is not for a release from the dreadful baptism of agony which he had voluntarily accepted. No; it is a prayer of full submission to the counsels of heaven;—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done!" What strength to the sufferer's sorely pressed spirit came with that supplication, even God's angel comforting him with celestial sympathies. So do good angels bring us peace, when we too, in griefs and disappointments, can say, *Thy will be done!* There is a wondrous balm, a strong support in resignation to God.

The disciples slept during this season of Christ's wrestling in the garden. It was not the sleep of indifference, but the overpowering influence of excessive grief. If it was not without blame, yet in the circumstances of intense excitement which were drawing so deeply on their endurance, it was not without many palliations. It was anything but a sign of deficient interest in their Master's sorrows. We have some noted instances of a like effect of very great anxiety. Dr. Rush says that profound sleep is a symptom of grief which he had often witnessed in mothers immediately after the death of a child. Criminals are known to sleep

Dr. Rush on this effect of grief.

The betrayal.

The arrest.

soundly the night before their execution, though previously under the most intense solicitude. The classical writers of antiquity mention this fact. One writes of a victim of peculiar distress, "At length a deep sleep weighed down his body." Another; "whilst he was yet speaking, in tears and grief, deep sleep overwhelmed him." Thus the disciples were overborne. But these heavy slumbers were soon to be rudely broken. Judas had often been there, and suspecting the retreat of Jesus, with lanterns and torches and a band of armed attendants, he ruthlessly invaded the Saviour's retirement, betraying him to his foes with a kiss of pretended friendship. Thus apprehended by a deed which stands alone in hideous enormity in the annals of crime, and which speedily sent its wretched perpetrator, driven by remorse, "to his own place" in perdition, Christ was at once taken to the house of the High Priest for trial and condemnation.

Even in the act of his arrest, we cannot fail to notice the regal superiority of the victim over his enemies. Such was the coward terror of this band of midnight assailants, that when Christ fearlessly declared to them that he was the object of their search, they all went backward and fell prostrate on the ground. They had not courage to face an unarmed, defenceless man, in whom they knew dwelt a more than human might. He needed not to summon the willing bands of hovering angels. Had he chosen to foil this arrest, one stroke of his omnipotence had changed them all to senseless dust. But his hour of voluntary suffering had come, and he followed his pursuers as a lamb to the slaughter.

I need not recite the familiar details of an investigation, which has not its parallel in atrocity among the records of man's injustice. In name alone was it the work of law; in reality it was a compound of malignant passion and duplicity. Arraigned at the bar of the Chief Priest, thence sent to Pi-

The tribunals.

Mockery of justice.

Crime and mercy.

late, thence passed over to Herod, by him remanded to the Roman — insult, perjury, contempt of every principle of honor, of mercy, of equity, stained the whole tissue of these proceedings against the unoffending prisoner. The attempt to convict him of rebellion against the spiritual or the civil polity of the nation was equally abortive. Neither against Jerusalem or Rome had he thus sinned. Perjury even could frame no valid pretext for his death. The most that could be made of his conduct, in the judgment of the Roman governor, could not exceed some vague charge of overzealousness as a religious reformer. But the vindictive purposes of a clique of implacable adversaries demanded his blood. “Crucify him!” “crucify him!” was the only reply of their callous hearts to the remonstrance of his heathen judge. Pilate could not withstand the flood of hatred which, swelled by the leaders of the Jews, swept through the tribunals. And at last yielding to an importunity of madness which he declared to be groundless, he delivered the condemned but not convicted Jesus to his murderers.

Never was there a plainer triumph of mob violence over all the dictates of truth and righteousness. Treatment, which had the veriest culprit been its victim, had been enormous wrong, towers into the dimensions of giant and next to infinite crime, when employed to crush a sinless sufferer. What, then, shall we say of its aggravation, when to *sinless* we add *divine*, and point in that victim to the Son of the living God? Alas! that men should thus have taken in hand the work of fiends, that mid these infernal transactions no voice was heard in vindication of the innocent; no arm was raised to stay this dismal tragedy. But no! the world's redemption was bound up in this catastrophe of guilt. Strange mystery of foulest sin and deepest mercy — that *thus* it behoved Christ to suffer and to enter into his glory.

The cross-bearer.

Daughters of Jerusalem.

Crowned with thorns piercing sharply his brow, spat upon and scourged by his infuriate persecutors, arrayed in a robe of mock royalty with a reed for a sceptre, loaded with every bitter and taunting abuse, Jesus had heard the sentence of death pronounced against himself. And now, behold the buffeted and bleeding man, bearing the ponderous cross, led forth to martyrdom. The shouting rabble press upon him, while faint with the exhaustion of these sleepless and anxious hours, the strength of the Redeemer sinks beneath its load. Not from pity towards their prey, but to reserve his endurance for fiercer conflicts, the heavy burden is removed from his shoulders, and another is compelled to carry the instrument of torture to the fatal spot. Happy man, if he understood the Godlike nature of him whom he thus befriended! Who that appreciates true honor, but would covet to have shared, by such a fellowship, the ignomy and the afflictions of God's righteous Son?

A company of women, his devoted friends, had hovered around the tribunal of Pilate; and now that Jesus was passing to execution, followed him with weeping lamentations. Christ observed their sympathizing sorrow amid the crowd of his revilers; and in tones of mingled fortitude and compassion turned their attention from his now inevitable sacrifice to the sad doom which his foes were bringing upon their own heads. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming in the which they shall say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us!" Fearful prediction of avenging justice, to be fulfilled in dreadful wrath, when the terrible imprecation of his destroyers, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" should be visited in its full intenseness of anguish upon the authors of this stupendous wrong.

Calvary.

Tortures of crucifixion.

The soothing cup.

Having reached Calvary, a short way beyond the western gate of the city, they nail the body of Jesus to the cross, and lift it between the earth and the heavens. Two public criminals sentenced to die are placed on either side, while Christ the sinless is thus literally "numbered among the transgressors." The extreme agony of the Saviour's sufferings exceed all attempts of conception, as lacerated with wounds, parched with thirst, and suspended in a most unnatural position, he wore out the last, long hours of life. This mode of death seems to have combined and concentrated the worst tortures of which the human frame is susceptible. It is described as "the most cruel and horrid punishment. Even the constrained situation of the body, with the arms stretched upward, sometimes for days together, must have been an inexpressible torment, especially as not the slightest motion or convulsion could take place without causing excruciating pain over the whole person, particularly in the pierced limbs and on the back, mangled by previous scourging. Besides this, the nails were driven through the hands and sometimes through the feet, exactly in the places where irritable nerves and sinews meet, by which the most acute pains must have been excited and constantly increased. As the wounded parts were always exposed to the air, they became inflamed;" * and in addition, the entire derangement of vital action throughout the system, the forcible compression and unusual impulse of the blood in different parts of the frame, must have converted the wretched sufferer into one mass of living, writhing anguish. And keenest perhaps of all, that intolerable thirst of raging fever redoubled to fearful horror the torments of this living death. Was that a soothing, pain-allaying cup which in a moment of relenting

* Rosenmueller.

He will not drink it.Spiritual conflict and agony.

pity, they reached him amid these expiring struggles? He tastes it, he will not drink it. No, he will bear to the last this doom of appalling distress, with not one faculty benumbed, to the whole measure of its bitterness. He has counted the cost of expiation.

“As at the first Thine all-pervading look
Saw from thy Father's bosom to th' abyss,
Measuring in calm presage
The infinite descent:
So to the end, though now of mortal pangs
Made heir, and emptied of thy glory awhile,
With unaverted eye
Thou meetest all the storm.
Thou wilt feel all, that thou mayst pity all;
And, rather wouldst thou wrestle with strong pain,
Than overcloud thy soul,
So clear in agony,
Or lose one glimpse of heaven before the time;—
O most entire and perfect sacrifice!”

Thus Jesus suffered. But had that palpitating body alone borne the weights of torture, we might have found a parallel to his pains. But its anguish was small to that which now was crushing his spirit. He died as none other died. He was slain to atone for a world's revolt from God. He hung upon the accursed tree, that those among others who passing by reviled him, might not perish eternally. Who shall fathom the immeasurable depths of that sorrow which rolled in upon the Saviour's soul, when Jehovah “laid on him the iniquities of us all”—the burden of that indignation which was due to human guilt. There was pain of an exquisite intenseness when his fainting voice sighed forth, “I thirst;” but awfully intenser was the pang which wrung from his torn and agonized spirit the mysterious cry, which heaven and the universe hath never heard but once, “My

Forsaken of God.Love and forgiveness in death.

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! ” Who knows the full significance of that heart-bursting exclamation, but he who uttered it from these depths almost of despair. He was groping through the valley and shadow of more than a mortal death. The “ pains of hell ” well nigh got hold on him as thus he took the sinner’s place. We draw the vail upon this spectacle of inexplicable suffering, while the firmament shrouds its face in darkness, for grief like this is too sacred for aught but silent adoration.

But though this Lamb of God was thus crushed with torture, how beautifully from that scene of convulsed nature shone forth the same sweet spirit of benevolence which had thrown around his entire life the radiance of heaven. Whence comes that voice of prayer for those whose hearts relented not, midst all this agony, from their murderous hate ; “ Father, forgive them, they know not what they do ! ” Who is this, that at such an hour has a thought and a word of tender concern for a dear disciple — a devoted mother ; that forgets not, in all his wrongs, in all the keenness of his own parting struggle, to speak forgiveness to the dying penitent beside him ? We gaze on this exhibition of a being nobler, diviner than humanity ever developed, and with the wondering centurion exclaim, “ Surely this man was the Son of God ! ”

“ Behold, O Israel ! behold,
It is no human One,
That ye have dared to crucify ;
What evil hath he done ?
It is your king, O Israel !
The God-begotten Son !

“ A wreath of thorns, a wreath of thorns !
Why have ye crowned him so ?
That brow is bathed in agony
’T is veiled in very wo ;
Ye saw not the immortal trace
Of Deity below.”

Night at noon-day.The catastrophe finished.

And now at last the powers of life were spent, the wrath of men and devils had done their utmost upon that body which alone their malice could destroy. One more loud cry of anguish pierced the hushed stillness of that noonday-night, and the pure soul of Jesus passed from its mangled tenement far beyond the reach of his crucifiers. The inanimate creation, as if in amazement at this deed of guilt without a name, mingled its convulsions with the terrors of that eventful moment. "The vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. And the graves were opened," while clothed again with vitality, their ancient inhabitants came forth, and after his resurrection entered into the holy city, and appeared to many. Christ's sacrificial work was finished. "And all the people that came together to the sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

Here, then, we pause, and in the presence of the dying Emanuel, we read among other lessons, the unspeakable aversion of God to sin, the impending doom of the sinner. See here the pressure of God's holy justice upon rebellion in his empire. "It goes in pursuit of its victim, (voluntarily assuming its expiation in man's behalf,) into the very heaven of heavens."* Ye who think that impenitency is but a trifling evil, who are wont to make light of it, look at this spectacle on Calvary, and behold God's published sentiment concerning it. Look there and see what sorrows this accursed thing cost the Son of God, that pardons for the penitent might be secured. Look there and ponder what God's righteous judgment will do to that soul who finds not forgiveness through the Great Atonement.

* Saurin.

Another lesson is here — the fullest possible exhibition of the compassions of Deity. Human language fails us in our attempts to embody even our limited, feeble comprehensions of that pity in heaven over earth's revolt, of which Calvary will forever stand as the most eloquent expression. What shall we say then, to the infinite breadth and depth of that idea, as it lies in the mind of God? If, too, in this world the Christian sometimes feels his bosom swelling with emotions which are almost overwhelming, as the vision of his expiring Lord melts his heart in wondering, adoring gratitude, how blissful beyond all present conception will it be to look hereafter upon that "Lamb in the midst of the throne," and study redemption in the light of his own countenance of love.

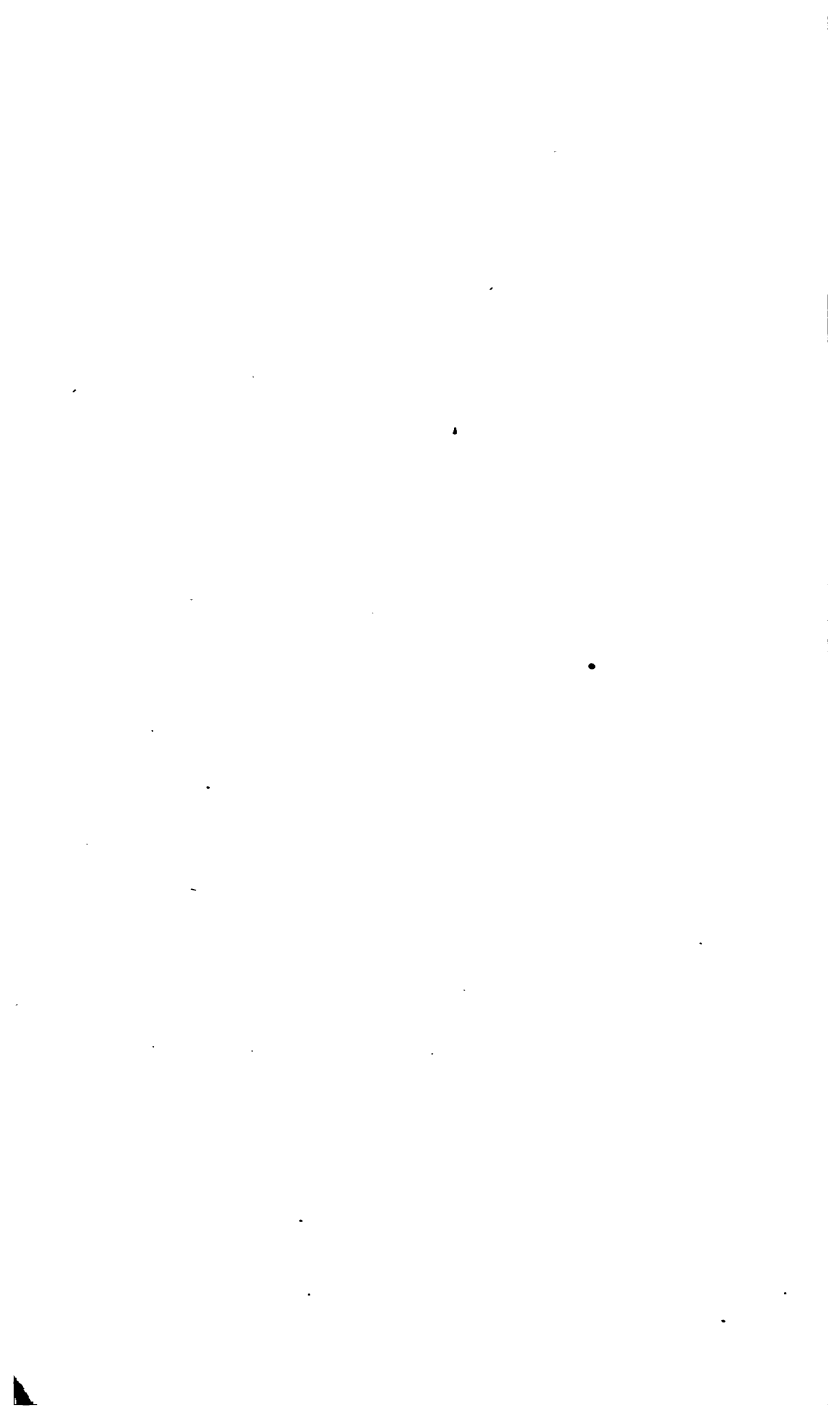
Here, moreover, we read the tenderest, the most impressive of all exhortations to a Christ-like character and life. Where should rebellion die, if not at the foot of that cross on which the Sinless bled to bring us nigh unto God? There should we make our own that self-consecrating pledge of the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

There is one spot where, with a vivid energy, these sentiments should possess the believer's heart — that sacramental feast where He is remembered and worshipped, who once was crucified, but now reigns a conquering Prince, our Lord. They come around that banquet whose souls his blood hath cleansed from guilt. How should the tides of humble, penitent, confiding, joyful emotion rise and mingle at such an hour, and bear the spirit far above the earth's attractions, nigh unto the place where the "just made perfect" sing the heavenly hosannas. There should the Christian soldier

A spot for memory and vows.

renew his oath of enlistment in this army of God's elect, as nowhere else he renews it — an oath to bind in its solemn pledge the truest affections, the most-enduring energies of our regenerate natures to Christ. Disciple of the Crucified, when the emblems of his love thus invite your reception, when his own voice within your bosom repeats the welcome — “Take, eat, this is my body,” “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it;” let every such return to Calvary be, through your own prevailing prayer for an increased sanctification, a means of rapid preparation to eat and drink with Christ and his saints at the supper of the Lamb on high.

In the cemetery of a far distant city I once saw a slab of white marble bearing neither name nor date, but inscribed only with these simple, touching words — *Will you forget me?* The stranger might have paused but a moment to remark the singularity of this device. But had a parent or sister or child or wife sought that grave and traced out that last appeal of affection, would it have thrilled no deep chord of memory and of love within the heart? What need of more inscription than this to open the fount of sympathy in their bosoms? This table is engraved with no epitaph, it bears no name which arrests a casual eye. But to the sight which faith has unsealed and quickened, it does reveal in invisible letters the writing penned by the hand that was pierced by the iron nails — “Will you forget me?” Christian, how responds thy soul, how has responded thy life, to this demand?



CHAPTER XXI.

WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE,
BUT IS RISEN. — LUKE.

THE sepulchre which received all that was mortal of the Son of God was not to retain that sacred form till dust should have time to return to dust. A high and glorious path was to be trodden by him who had expired on the cross, the path of life and immortality. Christ was not only to die, but to revive again, that he might be the forerunner of his people, their living friend, their guide, their herald into the inheritance purchased for them through his sacrifice. That he did thus vanquish the grave and ascend up on high, where “he ever liveth to make intercession for us,” is the constant assertion of inspired men; a fact which stands among the pillars of the Christian faith. We will now look at the history and bearings of this wonderful event.

As preliminary to this investigation, we will group together the considerations which conclusively establish the actual extinction of life in the crucified Redeemer. Death by the tortures of the cross was a slow and most agonizing process. The principal wounds being inflicted far from the vital regions, though they threw the whole system into extremest suffering, did not directly terminate existence. Frequently even days were lingered out by the miserable victim. To put an end to these torments, the Romans sometimes took additional methods to destroy the power of resisting dissolution by breaking the bones or other violence. On the present occasion, another motive urged a speedy dispatch of these persons. The

Christ was dead. Various proofs. The pierced side. Blood and water.

day of crucifixion, was the one previous to the Jewish Sabbath. Over the Sabbath it was unlawful for bodies to hang upon the cross in the customs of this people. The Jews therefore requested Pilate that the legs of their victims might be fractured to accelerate death, before the holy time should commence — another illustration of the “gnat and the camel.” The order was passed and enforced upon the thieves. But when the soldiers came to Jesus *they perceived that he was dead already*, and spared his body this violence. Thus they bore witness to his actual decease, while far from intending it, they fulfilled an ancient Messianic prediction: “A bone of him shall not be broken.” *

Yet lest by any possibility, life should not be utterly extinct beneath this appearance of dissolution, one of the soldiers with a spear thrust the heart of him, upon whose pierced side sinful men were to look,† and forthwith a stream of blood and water poured from the wound. Surgical examination has proved that a sanguineous and aqueous liquid is found in the cavities of the pleura after a mortal stab, when the pericardium has been ruptured, which is always fatal.‡ If Christ had not been completely dead, it were impossible to have survived a blow, which by its results demonstrates that it took effect in the very seat of vitality.

But again, when Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate some hours subsequently, and desired the body of Jesus for burial, Pilate was so incredulous of his death that he wholly refused the petition, until by a personal inquiring of the centurion having charge of the execution, he found that life was entirely extinguished.

And one more very important testimony to this fact was furnished unwittingly by the murderers themselves of our

* Ps. 84: 20 and Ex. 12, 46.

† Zech. 12: 10.

‡ Bloomfield.

Evidence of his enemies.

Early dawn.

Anxious visitors.

Lord. On the day after the crucifixion, "the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate saying, Sir we remember that that deceiver said, *while he was yet alive*, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch ; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch."

But all these precautions were powerless to hold the Prince of Life within the confines of the tomb. "While he was yet alive he had said to these his enemies, destroy this temple, his body, and in three days I will raise it up. His enemies had understood his meaning, and trembled lest he who so recently had said to Lazarus, "Come forth !" and the dead man came, should again vanquish the pale monarch and their accursed arts, by bursting the mortal stillness to which their assassin hate had consigned him. Nor were their tremors causeless.

Those faithful women who had lingered last at the cross had also marked the spot and manner of Christ's burial. Very early on the morning of the first day of the week, the third from the crucifixion, they repaired to the sepulchre with fragrant spices to complete the embalmment of his body. They were probably unaware of the circumstance of the sealing and guarding of the tomb, as this had been done after their departure from it. But they had seen the rock placed at its entrance, and as they went they inquired of one another, "who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ?" While thus conversing they reached the spot, and finding the stone removed and the door unguarded, went within the vault where they had seen the remains of their

The tomb empty.

Two angels.

Surprise and incredulity.

Master deposited. But they found no tenant within that still chamber. Perplexed and agitated, doubtful whether some one had stolen the beloved object of their search, or whether indeed he had arisen to life, "behold two men," angelic forms, "stood before them in shining garments." An earthquake had marked their descent, and already the keepers of that abode of death, struck with terror at the sight, had shrunk in dismay from their post, and Christ had walked forth though the unbarred gates of his temporary prison. Around the sacred place these celestial visitors still lingered for a moment to allay the anxieties of the disciples of Jesus with the glorious assurance; "He is not here, but is risen, as he said: Come see the place where the Lord lay."

Overwhelmed with surprise, a part of their company hastened to the city to acquaint the apostles with these tidings of their Lord. Yet slow of faith to believe, the words of the women seemed to them but as idle tales unworthy of credit. Still, ardently desiring such an event, a number of the disciples ran to the tomb to examine for themselves its condition. Two of them came first to it, and entering found nothing but the grave-clothes of Jesus carefully folded and laid by themselves. Having by repeated inspection assured themselves of these facts, the disciples returned unto their own home.

But Mary remained near the deserted sepulchre weeping; and stooping down to survey again the hallowed spot, she saw two angels, one at the head, the other at the foot where the body of Jesus had lain. To their inquiry, "Why weepest thou?" — she replied — "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." Turning from the place, Christ stood before her. But mistaking him, amidst her tears, for the keeper of the adjacent garden, she besought of him some information where the missing body could be found. Jesus said to her: "Mary!" That word,

"Mary" — "Master!"

The watch alarmed.

The bargain.

that tone, that look of accustomed tenderness told instantly to her the whole blissful truth. "Master!" was the single exclamation which carried from her full heart its quick response of assured faith, of adoring joy. What volumes of intensest emotion can sometimes be compressed into a word, a glance!

To the other women Christ also appeared as they were departing from the tomb and saluted them with the triumphant acclaim; "All hail!" They recognized his familiar voice, and in transports of gladness held him by the feet and worshipped him.

Meantime a part of the watch, recovered from their affright had gone to their employers with the astounding tidings of Christ's resurrection. Here all was aghast with consternation. Their plans were defeated. Beyond denial their victim had conquered. But these men were too desperately implicated in suppressing his cause to yield the struggle. Their malice devised a subterfuge well worthy of their folly. Though it was death to a Roman guard, under the military code of the empire, to be found asleep at his post, the rulers of the Jews gave large monies to the soldiers to bribe them to spread the story, that while they slept, the disciples came and stole away Christ's corpse, and the same Jews promised to shield these delinquent soldiers from the governor's wrath, if he should hear of their self-condemning report. "So they took the money and did as they were taught, and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day;" held on to with a blind, a dogged obstinacy, though hundreds of times the unanswerable question has been put, how could the soldiers have known what the disciples, or any one else, were doing, *while themselves, by their own confession were asleep?*

Again on the same day, Christ having appeared alone to Peter met two other of the twelve on their way to Emmaus,

Further interviews of Christ with his friends.The Ascension.

and shared their hospitality. They, returning to Jerusalem, had hardly communicated to the remainder of their number the joyous news, when Jesus himself attested in person to them all his resurrection by greeting them with the benediction—"Peace be unto you!" Seeing them doubtful of the reality of his presence, he showed them his hands and feet, still bearing the marks of his last tortures. After an interval of eight days, Christ came again amongst them, and removed the incredulity of Thomas by exposing to him his wounded limbs and side, calling forth from that doubting, but now convinced and adoring friend, the frank, the full expression of confidence in Christ's divine life, "My Lord, and my God!"

The intercourse of Jesus with his friends, during the forty days of his continuance on earth after his resurrection, was frequent and public, most thoroughly demonstrative of the fact of his return to an active existence. On the sea of Tiberias they beheld him, and by its shore partook of a familiar repast with him, so often accompanied around these secluded waters. On a mountain in Galilee, the eleven met him by appointment to receive still further instructions for their future work. After that, says Paul, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present; then he was seen of James and of all the Apostles; * and finally Paul himself was admitted to view, as an eye-witness to his resurrection, the body of him once crucified, but then ascended in an immortal life to the right hand of God; ascended in clear day from the Mount of Olives, in open and public presence of his followers, who gazed on his departing form, as it went up by superhuman power to heaven, until a cloud received him out of their sight.

* 1 Corinthians xv.

An objection started.

Profane history.

Where was the body?

I have thus reviewed the scriptural history of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It was accomplished by the combined energies of the Godhead, and is sometimes ascribed specifically to each of the sacred Three, for these are One. But at this point an objection is interposed.

It is this, that the testimony thus presented is that of friends, allies, complotters with Jesus, interested to devise and propagate the fiction of his resurrection for fraudulent purposes. Let us look at this a moment.

One thing is certain from all history, that the Christian campaign commenced its invasion of the world from Jerusalem, and was mainly carried forward by the evidence asserted for the divinity of its cause from the resurrection of Christ from the dead, as alleged by the early Church. We go not to the Bible for this fact. It is the concurrent sentence of profane writers, friends and foes, modern and ancient. Now one of two things must be true. Christ either rose as stated, or he did not. If not, as the opposite claim, then his dead body must have been somewhere and producible by somebody. Was it in the tomb? Confessedly not. The Jews could have found it there, and would have done so. Was it elsewhere, in the keeping of his enemies? No, for they were most deeply interested in its production. The apostles everywhere were preaching a *risen* Saviour; and if the Jews could have done it, that terrible fact to them would have been met by the exhibition of the lifeless body of him whom they had nailed to the tree. Was it in the possession of the disciples? So their adversaries affirmed. But we reply most promptly, no. Their whole salvation, their immortal hopes centred in the fact that Christ was a *living* Redeemer. They preached it. They suffered for it chains, imprisonments, tortures, persecutions, death. See what they bore for a religion of which this truth was the corner-stone;

The argument clinched.Uses of this great fact.

and say, is it possible that human folly or fanaticism could have done all this, while knowing that Christ's dead corpse was in their hands, a constant refutation of all their pretensions, a total subversion of all their hopes? Men do not, cannot thus persist in a wide spread and unfaltering combination to violate every principle of human nature, and personal advantage.

The truth, then, that the body of Jesus was never produced by his murderers ; most concerned to do so were it possible ; and the certainty that his body could not have been in the keeping of his friends, whilst they were dying most heroically to attest its resurrection, these evidences, coming from independent sources, demonstrate beyond the possibility of an overthrow the reality of Christ's resurrection from the grave in accordance with his own antecedent declarations.

A doctrine, which more than any other, was upon the lips of the early believers, cannot be without most important uses to us. In connection with his ascension to heaven, it was the sublime assurance of his incontrovertible Deity, triumphant over death and regnant in power and glory forevermore. To us it is the same. We shall not better adjust the relations of this great fact to ourselves, than by observing the applications it bore as announced by those who, under a direct, divine guidance preached "Jesus and the resurrection."

It was in their hands an illustration of the desperate wickedness of the unrenewed heart of man. By all the exaltation of nature and character which Christ by this event was shown to be possessed of, by so much was their guilt aggravated who rejected him as their Saviour. Thus Peter, in summing up their criminality who persecuted Christ to the cross, finishes the accusation by charging, "and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." So again ; "Whom they slew and hang-

How employed by apostles.Depravity of Christ's foes, then and now.

ed on a tree, him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly." No common crime was this. Nor could they justify themselves by pleading ignorance that such honor was in reserve for this victim of their rage. Jesus had forewarned them that death should not hold him captive; had demonstrated that in him reposed the power to make good that pledge. They were without excuse. Apostles so manifestly understood it. And the guilt of Christ's enemies, in their judgment, was the measureless iniquity of the crucifiers of one, whose resurrection, predicted and accomplished before them, declared him to be none other than Emanuel "God with us."

That wickedness is still in full vitality among us. Does the sinner unregenerate say that he has not shared in its perpetration? I know you have not violated Christ's person with cruel hands. He is thus beyond your reach. But by refusing his dominion, are you not an accomplice, so far as is possible, with those who having him in their power carried out the principle of rebellion to the awful point of shedding his blood? Is your resistance of his authority anything in kind diverse from that of those who having like you said, "we will not have this man to rule over us"—said one thing more—"Crucify him! Crucify him!" Besides, how does *this* fact affect men's ungodliness now, that they persist in their hostility to Christ after witnessing that last proof of his Deity, his conquest over the grave! His crucifiers saw not this when they sought his blood. But now men see it in its impregnable proof; and contending against the religion it authenticates, they are contending knowingly against Jehovah. If apostles, from the presence of that enthroned Redeemer, were to-day to address impenitent men, would they select words of milder denunciation than those with which they

 Immediate repentance.

Coming to judgment.

All must meet him.

bore home on his first rejectors, the charge of their stupendous crime?

These eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection and ascension held these facts as of alarming import to the unforgiven soul. With them, it was not his removal from the inspection of men. They constantly associated it with the omniscience, the omnipresence of his holiness, and his final coming to judgment. They believed and urged with utmost solemnity the truth, that Christ is the watchful spectator of human conduct, and that we must all appear at his bar to receive of the things done in the body, whether bad or good. And from this point they pressed upon sinners the duty of immediate repentance; "because God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."*

And has the order which shall convene that last tribunal been revoked? Does it not stand among the changeless things of God? Does not its execution hasten? Is not that inquisition, in all its impressive attributes of terror and joy, of hope and despair, of searching scrutiny and eternal recompenses, awaiting every soul of man? It is as true now as when apostles preached, that Christ was raised from the grave that he might be the judge both of the living and the dead; that before the inspection of his eye each mortal history must pass, that from his lips every actor in time's long drama must hear the fixed decree of "welcome" or "depart." Jesus lives, and all for whom he died must meet him. Every eye shall see him, and they also, who pierced him. Oh! what a day of dark and crushing anguish will that day be to the soul of Christ's rejectors.

* Acts 17: 31.

Christ's resurrection the strength and joy of the Church.

"Tis done; again the conquering chief appears
 In the dread vision of dissolving years.
 His vesture dipped in blood, his eyes of flame,
 The Word of God his everlasting name.
 Throned in mid heaven with clouds of glory spread,
 He sits in judgment on the quick and dead.
 Sinners! bow
 Your haughty heads, the grave protects not now.
 He who alone in mortal conflict trod
 The mighty wine-press of the wrath of God
 Shall fill the cup of trembling to His foes—
 The unmingled cup of inexhausted woes;
 The proud shall drink it in that dreadful day,
 While earth dissolves and heaven is rolled away." *

But from the same fact that *Jesus lives*, a glorious vista opens to the believer. It was the strong support upon which the early saints rested in calmest security. In every passage of severe trial, faith looked above to a witnessing, rewarding Saviour. Joined to him inseparably, they could fear no evil. Man's fiercest wrath could but send them the more speedily to his embraces. The stake, the cross, was but the door to his habitation in heaven. "Looking unto Jesus," they ran the race, they fought the battle for the prize. That prize, it was none other than the ravishing bliss of an admittance to "the city of God," to an "innumerable company of angels," to the "general assembly and church of the first-born;" and most desired of all, to "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant." For, "now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." He trod the path of life, and all who love him shall tread it also victoriously. True, it will lead them through deep waters, dark valleys, the domains of death, and by the judgment-seat. But their Redeemer is mighty. The shield of faith shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. What a tower of refuge is this

* James Montgomery.

Christ in glory mediatorial and regal.

for the Christian to stand in, and look out upon a crumbling universe ! What strength to his spirit is borne on that joyous announcement ; “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that *when he shall appear*, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Nor yet alone to the individual believer is the living power of Jesus a ground of confidence. He went through the palace doors of heaven, while angels shouted, “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in,” * that he might reign as monarch in Zion, the Defender of his church. That reign will be successful. In cheerful love, or humbled subjugation, his foes must bend before him. Not in vain has He taught us to pray : “ Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” Christianity has the life, the triumphant energy in it of its divine author. Adversaries cannot crush it ; unwise friends cannot more than temporarily cripple it. “ What ought indeed to excite our admiration, is that inextinguishable force and vitality in the Christian system which renders it effective for good, notwithstanding the pressure of almost any burden with which misjudging men may have encumbered it.” † In its holy truths, its divine sympathies, its superhuman headship, the Gospel cause is safe alike from internal dangers and external alarms. The Church is Christ’s cherished bride ; he will fold her to his heart through all this night of fear and tumult, until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

“ Good cheer ! good cheer ! Soon ends the bitter strife,
And thou shall reign with Christ in glorious life.”

* Ps. 24.

† Taylor’s Wesley and Methodism, p. 196.

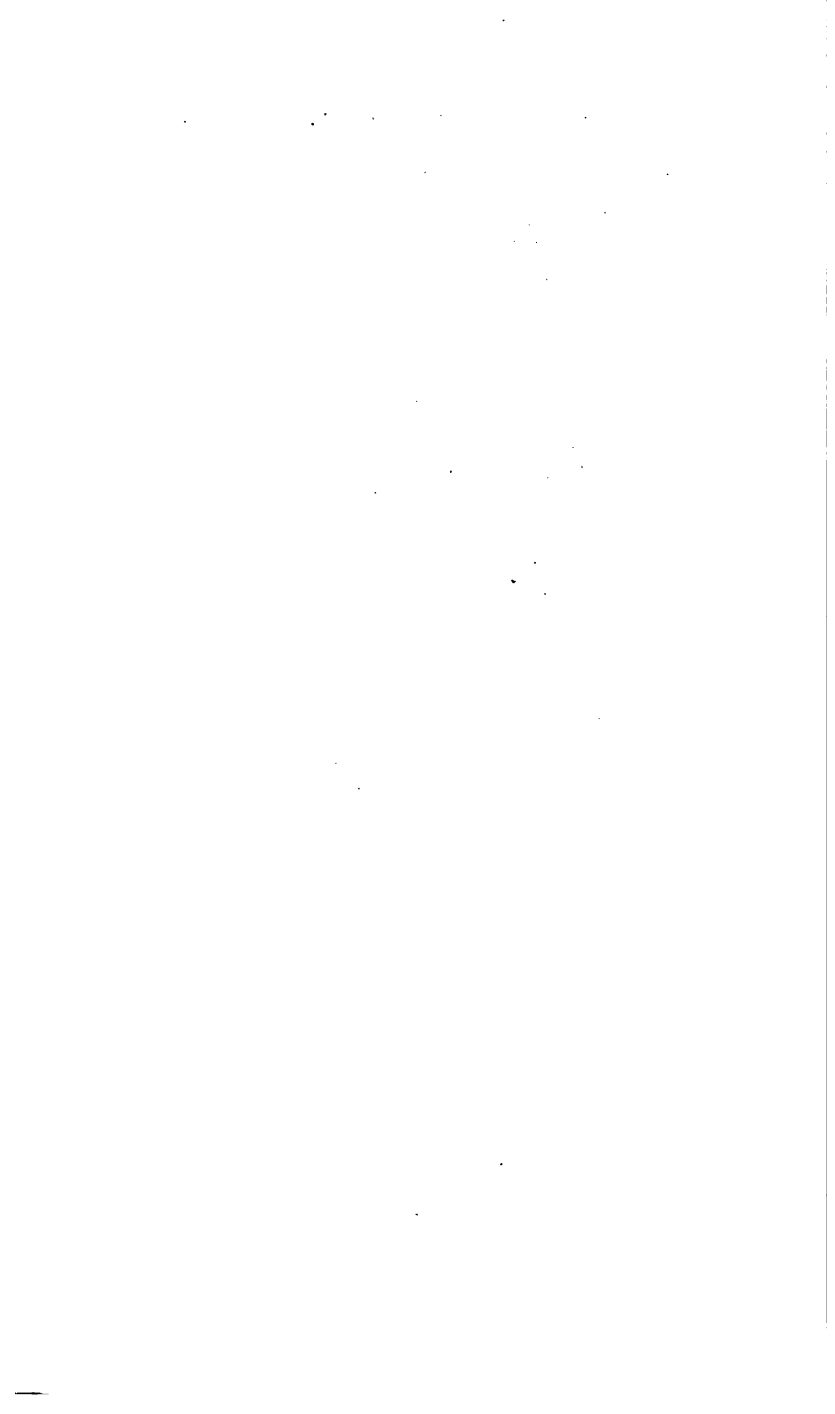
Jesus lives.

We may live.

A question.

Jesus lives! He lives to-day to save the unsaved soul; to possess it, to guide it by his Spirit with all the ransomed to endless glory. Why then should man's immortal nature lie dead in unforgiven guilt? He has atoned for human rebellion. Why, then, is unpropitiated enmity still holding souls away from reconciliation with God? He has built a resting-place for the weary. Why, then, ye restless, unblest wanderers are ye still self-cursed with the disquietude of a will at variance with God's, with affections which have in them no elastic upward spring? "The word was made flesh," "the Life was manifested," is manifested yet in these records of Emanuel, that ours may be an immortality of life and not of death.

"DOST THOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF GOD?"



CHAPTER XXII.

LORD, I BELIEVE.—JOHN.

THE Christ of history is valuable to us, not chiefly as a specimen of faultlessly developed manhood. His life reaches its loftiest purpose, not as that of the prophet-teacher of the higher truths of social morals, or religious doctrine. A more excellent nature and work than even these belonged to the idea of his earthly manifestation. The traces of this have shown themselves all along the course of our previous investigations, in references more or less direct to his great official business in our world as its Saviour from spiritual ruin. It has not comported with my design thus far to attempt a formal inquiry into the theological question of this redemption. But now that the review of the evangelical record is ended, I am not willing to dismiss the theme without devoting a concluding chapter to the method by which Christ's labors in the flesh become available to man for salvation.

This must find its explanation from the same source whence we derive the knowledge of his historic life. The inspiration, which was needful to give us a reliable narrative of the one, is especially necessary to put us in possession of the other. The saving virtue of Christ's personal connection with our race is entirely a subject of divine revelation. No part of it has been elaborated from the study of the constitution and harmonies of the visible creation. This teaches us much concerning the character and powers of the supreme originating cause of matter and being. But natural religion is silent about him, "whom God has set forth to be a pro-

Redemption a doctrine not of nature but revelation.

pitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins." General views of the moral government of God may be arrived at through deductions of reason operating upon the facts of the surrounding universe. But independently of an express communication from heaven, reason has no clue to the investigation of God's plan of reconciliation between sinners and himself, on the basis of Christ's labors in their behalf. Why this is so is easily understood. The arrangement did not result from the working of causes inherent in the organization of human relations, and therefore discoverable by human wisdom. It sprung from no law of spiritual necessity, obliged by its own conditions eventually to disclose its existence and bearings. The whole scheme of Christian redemption comes before us in the shape of special, positive appointment — a covenanted mode of procedure, freely entered into on the part of God, as it was altogether devised by him for this definite object. Therefore this method of restoration for mankind would naturally find its authoritative proclamation and its correct exposition through the medium of a verbal revelation from God.

However, then, we may prosecute other important studies by other sufficient guides, we are compelled, by the limitations of the doctrine itself, to pursue this inquiry by the light which God has given us in his word. To endeavor to evolve and state the spiritual meaning of Christ's life and death, without a profound and hearty submission of our understandings to the record which God has here furnished of his Son, is as essentially absurd, as it would be to think to acquire a foreign language by reading a grammar of our own; or to undertake to form an acquaintance with the religion of the Hindoo or the South-Sea Islander by perusing an epistle of Paul. Sciences and systems must be learned from their own text-books, and under deference to their own

A source of mistake.

Belief, knowledge, testimony.

constituting laws. I must be permitted to say that, in my most honest judgment, a forgetfulness of this obviously proper rule has produced a large proportion of the more serious difficulties which have gathered around this theme. Received as a doctrine of explicit information from heaven, examined in its fundamental assumptions and declared provisions, with a docile, humble, prayerful temper, the objections to the evangelical theory of Christ have been found to vanish; while reason and faith and love have joyfully united to enthrone this truth as the crowning glory of God's moral administration—that “He so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Divesting the matter as far as possible of technicalities, and bringing it closely home to ourselves as a personal interest of the first importance, let us now attempt to ascertain the nature of that tie which connects Jesus Christ with men as a Saviour.

Belief is the word which is commonly employed to mark that connection, in human experience. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Generally, this term denotes the mind's assent to whatever is the subject of credible testimony, in distinction from truth of which we are personally conscious. My own existence, for example, I know, through a direct intuition of the fact. The existence of the inhabitants of Europe I believe, on satisfactory evidence conveyed to my understanding from abroad. It is consequently obvious that almost the entire mass of our knowledge is of the latter description. It is not the product of individual consciousness, but of that conviction which springs from our own acquaintance of human affairs used as the basis of remoter deductions, and from the reliable statements of others. The trust which we repose in testimony proceeds from our

 Conditions of faith.

 Voluntary, not compulsory.

persuasion of the uniformity of causes and effects, according to their constitutional laws, both in the material and spiritual spheres. By an enlarged experience of life, a considerable observation of the characters and circumstances of men, we acquire a moral assurance of the veracity or falseness of the sentiments and representations which solicit our confidence. And as the laws of human feeling and conduct are uniform, we can as well be thus assured of what occurred eighteen hundred years ago as yesterday; of the historic trustworthiness of the contents of the Gospels, as of the deeds and sayings of a Cromwell or a Washington.

Belief is an active and voluntary exercise of the mind. It may indeed be true that, concerning some simple processes which are continually going on under mechanical forces, we cannot avoid our assent or dissent, — as that fire will burn, or that water will not freely run backward in its own channel. In things of this nature, it may be proper to say that we cannot help believing or disbelieving certain conclusions. But this concession does not affect our position as to the freeness of faith or its contrary. Upon the countless topics and interests which address our minds, and modify our spiritual welfare, our convictions are bound by no law of necessity. Faith or its absence are not effects, the causes of which are extraneous wholly to us, and beyond our control. We are not believers or sceptics because we can be nothing else. Let any one just follow the workings of his own thoughts in reading, for instance, a narrative of travels in some far-off continent. He will come in continual contact with novelties, with strange and unaccustomed phenomena, about which he will be conscious that his opinions are vacillating, until some consideration of sufficient weight occurs to fix his idea of their credibleness. But the next author he peruses may reverse his previous decisions, by throwing a

Process of conviction by evidence.An evasion exposed.

clearer light over the field of research. Glance back over such or any process of inquiry, and how manifest is it that, at every step, our individual mental powers have been busy in giving direction and shape to our conclusions. We feel this freedom in looking about for evidence to substantiate this or that position. Out of a multitude of facts or arguments which bear upon a given question, we can and do determine whether to look at these, or those, or none of them. Is the point of inquest the guilt or innocence of an accused criminal? What jury or what judge ever was forced upon a verdict, except as they themselves were active in gathering the testimony in the case, and in sifting and balancing that testimony according to the voluntary movements of their own minds. We talk of men's partiality or impartiality, candor or unfairness, in conducting investigations and drawing inferences. These words, which belong to the universal thought and language of mankind, have no meaning, if men are absolutely obliged to believe or disbelieve; are helplessly passive in arriving at the results of faith or scepticism. Our personal, moral responsibility, our operative will extends over and enters decisively into the various judgments upon which our understandings settle in view of evidence whether more or less complete and reliable. But where no evidence is attainable, no responsibility can hold.

It will hardly answer, then, for any one to essay the evasion of going behind our doctrine and affirming that he is not to be held accountable for his religious disbelief, because he cannot control his convictions as to the claims of Jesus Christ. Intellectually, these are a matter of testimony. The sources of proof are within reach. The personal existence, character, acts, relations to our race of the Son of God challenge our examination, our decision in the light of such proof and illustration as they can command. As a study addressed to our

 Historic faith.

The faith that saves.

 Intellect and heart.

mental powers, this question of Jesus and his redemption does not essentially differ from any moral investigation historically conducted. \ Belief in Christ, speculatively, is the same thing as belief in Alexander, or Cæsar, or the voyages of Columbus. It is a conclusion concerning his historic value, drawn from trustworthy authorities. And, let it be noted, that while this speculative or intellectual faith in Christ is not of itself religious or saving, it is in its place necessary to the exercise of that belief in the Son of God which is unto everlasting life. A Christian, who repudiates as of the nature of the mythical our evangelic narrative, is hence a very difficult, if not impossible conception.

What more than this mental consent to the testimony of the Scriptures concerning Jesus Christ enters into a sufficient believing in him, we are now at the point to consider.

We cannot separate between the agency of our intellectual and moral faculties in this act. We cannot give invariable precedence to the one or the other in securing a genuine confidence in Christ as a Saviour from guilt. While usually the will is approached primarily through the convictions of the understanding, sometimes the affections take the initiative and lead onward the judgment and the choice in favor of duty and truth. But, be the specific movement of God's spirit upon us what it may in drawing us to Christ, the reception of him on our part for redemption is ever the combined submission of our understandings and our hearts — our souls in their capacities of thought and of love — to him as our Deliverer from condemnation, as the Lord and Master of that life which thus we receive from him. / It is a free and sincere act of the will, produced by divine influence in us, by which we transfer ourselves, in all our rational faculties, over to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved by him from spiritual and eternal death, according to the plan of redemption

Belief on the Son of God.

Life and death.

declared to us in the Gospel as made available through his labors in our behalf.

Christian faith is not believing generally in God. It is, distinctly and specifically, believing in the Son of God. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The title, "Son of God," applied to Christ by the New Testament writers, carries with it a reference to the manifestation of his pre-existent Deity in our world as the Redeemer of men, the unincarnate Logos or Word moving forward now in visible presence to execute the office of Saviour. This citation is an express assertion of the necessity of his presentation to mankind as an object of religious confidence. Belief in him has the promise of life, nay more, it is life itself — life in the recovered favor of God — life never to expire, to relapse into spiritual death. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." If the reverse of this statement had not been added, the inference would be irresistible, that some neither do the one of these things, nor enjoy the other. But the proposition is logically and precisely reversed : "and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him ;" — *abideth* — that is, it remains where it already is, and has been. Its resting upon him has measured back all the past duration of his unbelievingness, and will measure forward all its future continuance. This "wrath of God" is his judicial disapprobation, abhorrence of a condition of moral being and action hostile to his own. It is death to the soul on which it abides. From its endurance there is no escape except by believing in the Son of God. At least, to all to whom the proclamation of Christ's salvation has come, this positive act of accepting his overtures is indispensable to their deliverance from condemnation. If to others, made truly

Purpose of Christ's advent.**Scripture testimony to redemption.**

penitent for sin, mercy may be dispensed *through Christ* without a personal knowledge by them of his Gospel, this alters not the obligation of those who possess this knowledge, to repose their confidence in his mediation, if they would be restored to God.

The great purposes of Christ's advent in the flesh were to announce more distinctly the necessity of his undertaking the business of human redemption, and actually to accomplish that work. In fulfilling these intentions, he taught, he obeyed, he suffered. To believe in him is to rest our faith cheerfully, acquiescingly, in the truth of these teachings, the sufficiency of these acts for our salvation. Without reciting at length the many scriptures which set forth the nature of Christ's labors in redemption, I will group together the leading terms and expressions by which inspired men have represented this subject of all others most vital to our spiritual well-being.

The types and prophecies of the Old Testament economy which relate to the Redeemer, are pervaded throughout with the idea of sacrifice, expiation, atonement for sin. The apostolic writings are full of the recognition of this fact, and its application to the death of the Son of God. It is, accordingly, declared that Christ was sacrificed as our Passover, or paschal lamb ; that he is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world ; that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree ; was made a curse for us ; that his soul was made an offering for sin ; that, as our High Priest he offered himself as the one oblation, entering once for all the holy place, by his own blood, — the fulfilment or antitype of the whole propitiatory Jewish ritual ; — he gave his life a ransom for many ; redeemed us to God by his blood ; was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, bore our griefs, by whose stripes we are healed ; Jehovah laid on him the in-

Harmony of statement.

An atonement is possible.

iquity of us all ; he was our sin-offering ; died the just for the unjust to bring us unto God ; has made atonement, reconciliation for us ; washes us from our sins in his own blood ; justifies us by his grace ; and by virtue of his death has become the Mediator between God and man, the Advocate, Intercessor, great High Priest and Saviour of all who put their trust in him.*

Representations like these, running through the Inspiration of some sixteen continuous centuries, do commit the Bible, as it seems to us, most fully and unmistakably to the fact of the true and proper vicarious nature of Christ's death for human salvation. If all this variety of statement, pointing so steadfastly in one direction, does not affirm that Christ literally gave himself in our stead to die as our atonement, ransom, substituted sacrifice, then we may safely say that such a fact cannot be expressed in any known forms of speech. But this would be equivalent to affirming that an atonement by Christ for sinners was an impossibility, which certainly no one is competent to maintain. If it be objected against as unreasonable, unnecessary, unjust that one should die in the place of another, I answer, *that* is not the question, but *this*, does Inspiration teach the doctrine in language which can teach nothing else except by an unnatural, violent process of interpretation? We are not put upon the business of determining what it might be reasonable, necessary, just for God to do or to reveal in the premises ; for a competency in us to

* These texts are referred to in the order of their citation as follows:—

1 Cor. 5:7; Jno. 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 3:13; Is. 53:10; Heb. 9; Matt. 20:28, and Mark 10:45; Rev. 5:9; Is. 53; Id.; 2 Jno. 2:2, and 4:10 (Greek) with Lev. 6:6-7, Sept. and p. p.—1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 5:10-11; Lev. and Heb., passim. Rev. 1:5 and 7:14; Rom. 5:1 and 8:24; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jno. 2:1; Heb. 7:25; 9:11; Ac. 5:31. Cf. Turnbull's Theophany, 220-222.

 Its fact and vindication.

 Humanization of Deity a natural want.

do this would subvert the ground in human ignorance and perverseness of the need of a superhumanly inspired word of God. So we find it that they who thus prejudice adversely the mediatorship of Christ confess to very small if any want of a Bible beyond their own ability to furnish. But the work of him who respects the divine integrity and authority of Holy Scripture is to gather carefully and candidly from it what the love and wisdom of heaven have accomplished for our redemption. And doing this faithfully, he need have never a fear that he shall be required to implicate the acts of Deity in anything unreasonable, unnecessary or unjust. Consequently, not in proof of this feature of the Christian religion but in its defence, we have no hesitancy in joining this issue — that the vindication of Christ's expiatory sufferings from these aspersions is as triumphant by sound reason and equitable law, as its revelation from God is verbally distinct in the pages of his word.

At the threshold of these studies, with an eye to the declared necessities and promised provisions of his redemptive mission, we accepted the advent of this "Sinless One" as a true incarnation of Divinity. It cannot escape a careful inquirer how the human mind has demanded this stupendous phenomenon, as if by an instinctive sense of want. Next to the idea of God seems to come that of his personal manifestation, his visible embodiment, to establish a conviction of relationship between him and us; to explain to us more intelligibly his nature, but chiefly to give us pledge of deliverance from moral destruction and restoration to God in sympathy and love. Pagan theologies are full of these descents of Deity into fleshly conditions. Greek, Hindoo, and many less elaborate systems of religion have made room for a large exhibition of this intercourse of God with men. The ground-idea was right, erratic as have been its outgrowths. It is

 Essential to redemption.

 Greek and Hindoo theology.

not a childish superstition, a craving of the infantile weakness of nations ; for the most intellectual of unevangelized tribes have gone the farthest into this peculiar tendency. Both the understanding and the heart put in a strong plea that " God in very deed should dwell with men." Here then the wonderful truth of " God with us " enters boldly into the stream of veritable history. That event was literally witnessed for one entire generation, which under the pressure of unsatisfied want was sought after so longingly in the myths of Jupiter and Vishnu. " The Word was made flesh," pure Divinity took on a mortal covering, came into organic union with humanity, to defend it from its mighty foes, to rejoin it to God and holiness. " It is declared that He who had had converse with holy men in their hearts, He whose life was the light of men, had brought himself nigh to all, so that He could be seen with human eyes, handled with human hands."*

* F. D. Maurice, " Religions of the World and their Relations to Christianity." With respect to the demand of men naturally for this fact of Divine Manifestation, this able writer adds the following paragraph:— " I have said that the Scripture speaks of *this* Incarnation as the means for the redress of mortal evils. But if we use its language strictly, we shall make a closer approximation to the Hindoo apprehension ; . . that it was expressly to deliver men out of the power of the destroyer, to break in pieces his kingdom, that the Eternal Word became one with his creatures. Nowhere more distinctly than in Christian Theology is there the recognition of the fact which the Siva worshipper perceives . . that misery and death have gotten hold of the earth ; nowhere a more emphatic affirmation of the witness which the heart and conscience of men have borne everywhere, but with special earnestness in Hindostan, that . . in the region of man's inner being is the fiercest debate with the evil which he sees without ; that there . . . he has to encounter it in its highest form, in its most radical principle. The Gospel does not start with a philosophical lie ; what man by bitter experience has discovered to be his condition it assumes to be his condition." pp. 192, 193. This small but very thoughtful volume of Boyle Lectures seems not to be marked by certain opinions which subsequently lost its distinguished author the chair of Divinity in King's College, London.

Method of salvation.

How sin can be pardonable.

We are, then quite within the spontaneous endorsements of reflective minds in laying thus firmly upon a strictly Divine basis the ground-work of human salvation. Its problem is deliverance from sin's condemnation and guilt; from the consequent displeasure of God. This rests on us because of transgression. The penalty was, and is, and must be death. For his chosen, persistent wrong-doing man has brought over his soul — his present well-being and his eternal hopes — the awful frown of God; God the immaculately holy, the immutably true; God the Sovereign as righteous as he is good. If now the question is debated, how may a sinner escape the power and doom of rebellion? — will his own simple repentance save him, or needs there be some prior, preparatory service done *to make sin pardonable*? — we reply; this is not a matter which involves simply God's personal, parental feelings of compassion towards the lost. Were this all, then might a contrite prayer for mercy avail to reinstate an offender in the Divine complacency without any other interference. But this is a question of law, of moral government, of pledged veracity, of vested rights and interests, of influences most mighty for or against the maintenance and extension of holiness, all centering in God's administrative acts as Universal King. If these forbid him to over-ride his own equitable statutes in order to reach his sceptre to a sinner by a bare stretch of regal prerogative, it proves not that he is hard-hearted, but true-hearted. If at this juncture we see advancing his incarnated Son, of the same essence with himself, to sustain that government and legislation unweakened, which holds the sinner under the death-sentence, by himself stooping to the sacrifice of the accursed tree, we are not called on to believe that a vindictive hatred in God towards his creatures claimed this atonement or found delight in these sufferings of the innocent One. We know that, on the contrary, it was

Christ answers the soul's questions.

the tenderest pity of our injured and insulted Sovereign which prompted this method of maintaining his integrity as a ruler, without the literal infliction of endless perdition on all mankind. If, in carrying out this arrangement, we are taught that Christ suffered in our room, that he bore the punishment of our sins; as we know he did it cheerfully, no charge of cruelty can be made good on the side of heaven. Nor is it required of us to hold that he in every respect took the stand of the guilty. He could not do this in the experience of the worst part of a sinner's doom — *remorse* — for he was sinless and had no "worm" at the root of memory. He did not, consequently, endure that hell of shame, that confusion of spirit, which we should have borne eternally under the unremoved penalty of law; which the unforgiven beyond the grave encounter. He was our substitute in no such sense as to become as great a rebel against truth and right as the aggregated wickedness of earth could make him. The virtue of his atonement, as a device of government for the liberation of condemned offenders, we may conclude to be this — "an equivalent in law and justice, which makes our pardon and salvation consistent with the highest claims of righteousness." * And so we believe that Christ regarded his own presence in the world, and the anticipated value of his crucifixion, when he demanded the attention and confidence of men to himself as the world's Redeemer, and said, with a striking illustrative reference to a well-understood incident of the Jewish typical history; "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

The grasp of the soul aware of its actual ruin upon this only help — in other words, its act of saving faith — has

* Turnbull's Theophany, p 206.

How faith grasps his offers of grace.

been variously illustrated. We have met with some very perfect exhibitions of this exercise in the subjects of Christ's compassion when among men. I will here introduce another from the conversations of a christian pastor with a deeply aroused religious inquirer, whose difficulty was that of many — to make an intelligent self-appropriation of this provision of rescue and grace.

“Oh! sir, it is all dark to me! Faith — I cannot understand it.”

“See here, my dear child. If you were here on this island, and it was going to sink, you would be in a sad condition if you could not get off. There would be no hope for you, if you had no help. You would sink with the island. You could not save yourself. You might get down by the shore, and know and feel the necessity of being over on the other side quickly, before the island should go down. But you could not get there alone. There is a wide river betwixt you and the place of safety where you wish to go. It is so deep that you could not wade it. It is so wide and rapid that you could not swim it. Your cause would be hopeless, if there was no help for you. You would be lost! But there is a boat there. You see it going back and forth carrying people over where they want to go. People tell you it is safe, and you have only to go on it. It seems safe to you as you behold it in motion. You believe it is safe. Now, what do you do in such a case? You just *step on board the boat*. You do not merely *believe* it would save you if you were on it; but *you go* on it. You commit yourself to it. When you get on, you do not work, or walk, or run, or ride. You do no thing, *but one*. You *take care not to fall off*. That is all. You just trust to the boat to hold you up from sinking, and to carry you over where you want to go. Just so, trust yourself to Jesus Christ to save

Illustration from Spencer.

How faith works in the life.

you. He will carry you to heaven. Venture on him now. He waits to take you."

* * * * *

"I paused for a little time; and as I watched her countenance she appeared to be absorbed in the most intense thought. Her brow was slightly knit; her lips quivered; her fine eyes roamed from side to side and often upwards, and then closed for a minute. And seeming utterly forgetful of my presence she slowly pronounced the words, with a pause almost at every syllable, which had last been uttered. Then turning her eyes upon me, she said; "I do want to come to Christ — and rest on him. If my God will accept such a vile sinner — I give myself to him forever. Oh! he will accept me by Christ — who died! Lord — save me — I lie on thee — to save me." *"

A *belief*, therefore, which is unto salvation, brings the consciously condemned by God's commandments to the cross of Christ, with a conviction of his own helpless, ruined condition; with a readiness to abandon all reliance upon himself for aid; with a willingness to accept of Christ's offers to him in this emergency, as a sufficient, an entire Mediator for him to God. It is the resorting of a soul to divine mercy for life which knows that it is dead in trespasses and in sins, and can only live in forgiveness and holiness as God through Christ has mercy free and undeserved for it. It is a faith which, according to its opportunities of knowing God's pleasure in his arrangements of grace and requirements of duty, justifies the divine will, submits to it, loves it, endeavors conscientiously to harmonize with it. It is a faith, consequently, which must mourn contritely over all its remembered and unremembered offences. It is an obedient faith. It puri-

Hebrew saints.Salvation without personal belief.

fies the heart. It enthrones God over the will and affections. It overcomes the world. It is this substantially which has opened the door of salvation, through grace, to all believers. This was the faith of Abraham, of Abel, of all the Old Testament saints. So far as they knew God's nature and plans, they accepted these in the only rightly religious spirit. As the scheme of redeeming love, through a future sacrifice, glimmered or shone on their vision, they confided in its pledges, and devoted themselves to the practice of piety under the promptings of the Spirit of regenerating and sanctifying grace within them. They believed God, staggering not at his promises or precepts, but persuaded that he would find a way to save all humble and penitent souls ; and this was counted to them for righteousness. Essentially, their faith and hope and love were Christian. Their Gospel, so far as it went, was that of the one Redeemer. They were the ancestors, religiously, of our family. " And did all eat the same spiritual meat ; and did all drink the same spiritual drink ; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

This disposition of heart God will nowhere reject. He recognizes it as the main object of his desire in man wherever found ; as the genuine fruit of his Holy Spirit. It involves a sincere conviction of personal guilt and moral helplessness ; an honest contrition for sin ; a true desire to be in union with the infinitely pure and good. It is a state of soul which we believe God's Spirit *can* produce outside of the limits of the knowledge of the Christian doctrine, to which " Christ and him crucified " if announced will be as welcome as he was to the praying, devout Cornelius. Cases of this kind are on record, not numerous but distinctly, in our missionary annals. And to such a preparedness to receive this grand truth, though never known this side the world of per-

The heathen.

Dwight.

Baxter.

Wilson.

fect light, as well as to its actual reception, the pledge of Christ's redemption will doubtless be availing — "Whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." That "look of the heart" in the right direction and with the right feeling, will not be a failure, even if it cannot pierce the fog of pagan obscurity to where the cross of the "Martyr Lamb" is erected.* A penitent heathen may be saved by Christ's atonement without a personal faith in his death not published to him, as easily, so far as present means of judgment guide us, as an unconscious infant. Such faith can hardly be demanded where it cannot be rendered. This is not saying that

* Dwight in his "Theology," Vol. I, p. 268, topic—"The Sovereignty of God"—says: "Let me add, that not one of them [Christian or Heathen] is placed in a situation, in which, if he learns and performs his duty to the utmost of his power, he will fail of being finally accepted." This, in its connections, I understand as covering entirely the position above stated. Cf. Knapp's Theology, p. 319. Phila. Ed.: 1 Vol: 8vo.

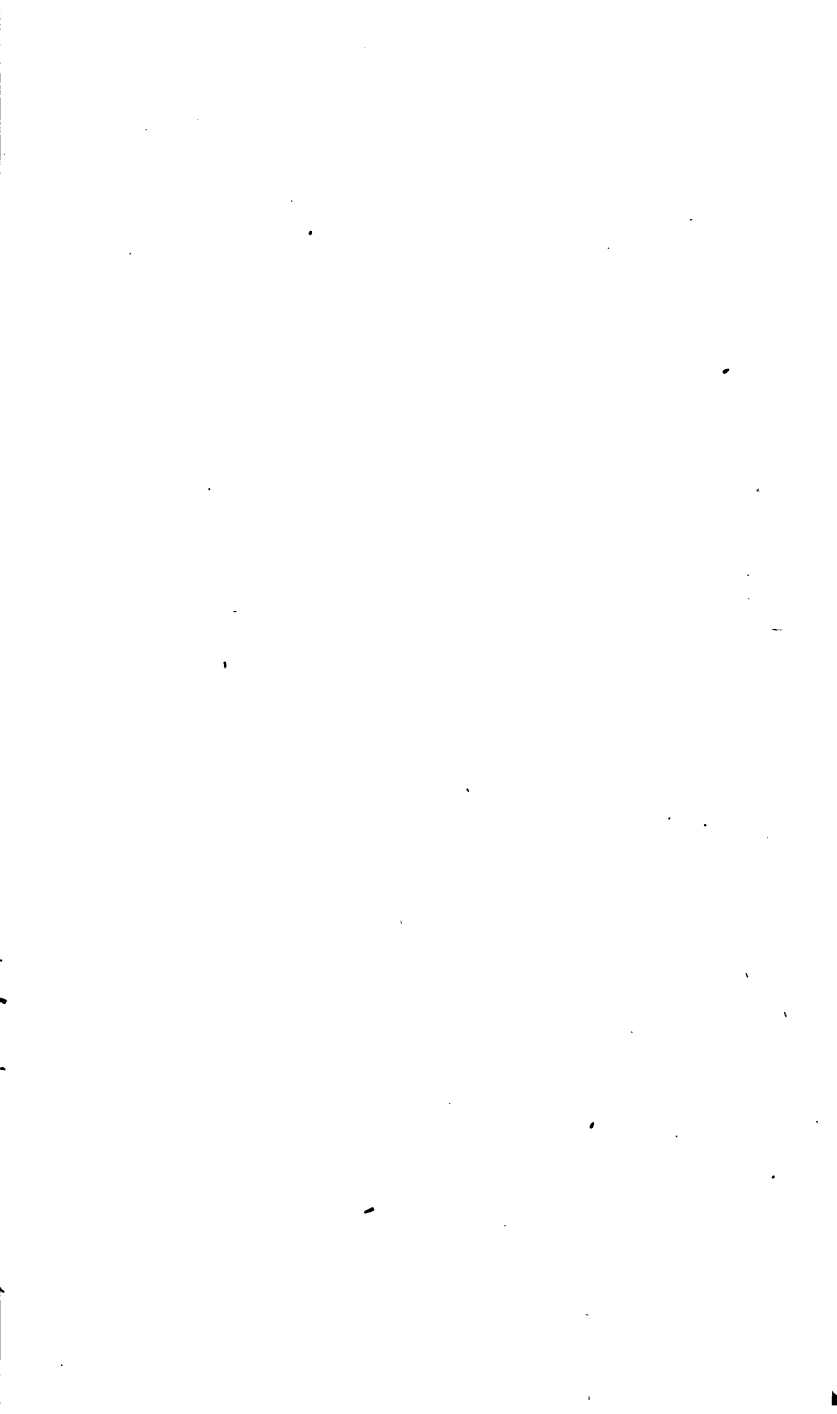
Since writing the preceding, I find these views very fully expressed by Richard Baxter; v. Bib. Sacra for April, 1855, pp. 366-368; which thus states his position as set forth in the "End of Controversy;"—"that faith in the atonement is necessary where the atonement can be known, but where it cannot be known, God exacteth not of men according to what they have not, but only requires a good use of what they have. "Though infants and idiots (says Baxter) cannot actually believe, they may be saved by Christ." Pagans when admitted to the kingdom of God, are saved by Christ alone, in the exercise of true repentance, and of the feelings of a soul in love with God and goodness. When penitent, the heathen have been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, on the ground of Christ's atonement, although they have never heard of their Redeemer or their Sanctifier. Baxter, however, does not suppose that *many* of the heathen are thus regenerated.

Dr. Jas. P. Wilson, of Philadelphia, a father of American Presbyterianism, in an "Essay on the Probation of Fallen Man," says of the Heathen—"nor does it become us, without a divine warrant, to say that they can have no mercy in Christ." p. 74.—"Must they all be swept off to perdition for not believing that which it has been impossible for them to believe? Neither revelation, nor reason, unless we are greatly mistaken, affirm this." p. 106.

But personal faith is necessary where Christ is known.

many of the "dwellers in darkness" are thus saved. The probabilities are quite the reverse. The thought, however, has its uses and alleviations, and its place in a fair vindication of the ways of God to men. A really honest intention and effort, by whomsoever made, to be reconciled to God in penitence and faith, in God's own way provided and announced, will also not be ineffectual, though the mind may labor in doubt concerning important points of Christian doctrine and duty. But the whole thing must be transparently sincere to the eye of Omniscience, and the whole nature must be in earnest to be taught and led by God into all truth and obedience. The fair construction of these assertions can tend to no spiritual indifferentism or licentiousness. For, on the other hand, where no disposition, no purpose like this exists; where a proud, unyielding, sin-loving impenitency reigns; where the Mediator is knowingly rejected or neglected in his proposals of reconciliation; where the soul is conscious that it prefers ungodliness to piety, and intends to indulge its temptations, Christianity has no blessing for *these* beyond its temporal and secular benefits; Jesus the "Sinless One," the "Life," the "Light" of men, has brought them no immortal good by his incarnation and sacrifice.

"O GOD, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; grant us, we beseech thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom, where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end, AMEN."





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